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JACK KEROUAC'S SPONTANEOUS PROSE:
A PERFORMANCE GENEALOGY OF THE FICTION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by
Justin Trudeau
B.S., Oregon State University, 1995
M.A.I.S., Oregon State University 1999
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Abstract

This study analyzes Jack Kerouac's writing method of spontaneous prose and articulates how the method can be understood as performative writing. Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," *On the Road*, *Visions of Cody*, and *Doctor Sax* are explored to evaluate both the successes and failures of the author's attempts to break literary boundaries and create a new writing method based upon spontaneous tenets. These three novels, which were written in succession from 1950 to 1953 when Kerouac was in his most productive period, represent both the emergence and dissent of the author's use of performative writing.

To explicate the cultural genesis and dissemination of Kerouac's writing method, the historiographical method of performance genealogy is utilized to address two fictions operating within the larger discourse surrounding Kerouac. First, by focusing on the author's works rather than on his biographical life, this study seeks to contribute to our understanding of Kerouac's status as an author and as a performer of fiction. Second, by focusing on the cultural historicity of his writing method, it is argued that Kerouac's method of spontaneous prose is a much more complicated approach to novelistic discourse than both his earlier critics and some contemporary fans have acknowledged.

By addressing spontaneous prose as a method of performative writing, this study articulates what spontaneous prose is and what it does. To this end, the study tracks the doing of spontaneity over the course of three separate literary performances of the novel. As the genealogical trajectory of the writing method demonstrates, in *On the Road* Kerouac has only begun to implement the changes he wanted to explore after discovering his literary method. *Visions of Cody* represents the author's commitment to the writing

method, but as its series of literary experiments shows, Kerouac is not yet able to balance his writing method with a sustained approach to narrative story telling. Finally, in *Doctor Sax*, Kerouac is able to achieve what his two earlier novels had not. That is, a synthesis between the form of invention and the subjects of invention themselves. Implications for performance studies and performative writing are explored.

Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose

Jack Kerouac's novels have never been enough. Due to the thinly-veiled autobiographical nature of his fiction, Kerouac the person, and not the author, has drawn much of the focus in both popular and scholarly circles. There are no fewer than ten biographies written about the man. His journals, letters, and even his dreams have all been published. Recently, Paul Maher's biography, which hails itself as the "definitive" version of Kerouac's life, has been published, which would announce that perhaps the biographical versions of the author's life might have been exhausted. We shall see. Whether casual or critical, Kerouac's biography remains one of the cornerstones of those interested in his literary contributions. Based in part on this bias, Kerouac's literary contributions have yet to be thoroughly mined, and commentary on his work tends either to mythologize or chastise what Kerouac would come to call his spontaneous prose method of delivery.

The purpose of this study is to track the cultural genesis of Kerouac's spontaneous prose and its genealogical performance over the course of three of his novels. Starting with the essay "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," and focusing on the seminal period from 1950 to 1953, I examine *On the Road*, *Visions of Cody*, and *Doctor Sax* to evaluate the relative success of Kerouac's writing method. These three novels are chosen because they represent both the beginning and the apex of what Kerouac was able to accomplish before both fame and alcohol would snuff out his life prematurely at the age of forty-seven.

In pursuing the idea of Kerouac's novels as a depository of performance and culture, I refer to Strine, Long, and Hopkins's definition of performance as an "essentially contested concept, meaning that its very existence is bound up in disagreement about what it is, and that the disagreement over its essence is itself part of that essence" (183). Performance theorists relate the question of performance to culture, which itself is an essentially contested concept. Culture's set of meanings and social-political boundaries are marked, contested, executed and revised by means of performance. Questions regarding the nature and consumption of performance are questions of culture. Specific to this study, the issues of culture and performance are interested in the effect spontaneity has on the performance culture in which it is made manifest.

By locating this culture within the cultural artifacts supplied by Jack Kerouac, the author is understood as a performer. In his work *The Performing Self*, Richard Poirier offers an explanation as to how the author can be understood as a performer. He explains that the author's performance is a work of power and that, "It's performance that matters—pacing, economies, juxtapositions, aggregations of tone, the whole conduct of the shaping process" (86-7). Writing is made up of multiple performances as it is shaped and then later presented as a contested artifact of power to the culture in which it is assimilated. Poirier explains, "Out of an accumulation of secretive acts emerges at last a form that presumes to compete with reality itself for control of the minds exposed to it" (87). Often times the form of this localized power can be read as the style we come to associate with a particular author's performance acts. As a site of cultural hegemony, the

novel and its performance of stylistic influences can be viewed as a rich source of contestation operating within historical ideologies.

Projects detailing the relationship between the author and performance culture provide examples by which scholars may cultivate their own studies. In *Acting Naturally: Mark Twain in the Culture of Performance*, Randall Knoper explores the ways in which nineteenth-century entertainments conditioned Mark Twain's writing. He argues of Twain that "his culture and society conditioned his writing; his aims and terms of representation drew their existence and urgency from cultural contradictions" (3). Knoper locates these contradictions within issues of power found in the performance and representation of masculinity, psychologies of acting, the body, race and public spectacles. In a similar vein, David S. Reynolds details the performance traditions influencing Walt Whitman in his cultural biography, *Walt Whitman's America*. Reynolds focuses on distinctively American performance traditions found in theater, oratory, and music, outlining how these nineteenth-century practices influenced Whitman's own poetic performances. The author argues that Whitman's poetry challenged political boundaries and that "This boundary-dissolving aspect of his verse can be tied to a populist performance culture that, in its various manifestations, had a cumulative impact on him that was perhaps as great as any other force" (156).

Along with projects such as these, my approach to Kerouac and culture also has its antecedents in the discussion of post-WWII US culture. In *Kerouac's Crooked Road: Development of a Fiction*, Tim Hunt postulates the significance of performance as it relates to Kerouac's use of spontaneous prose, especially as it is constructed in the novel *Visions of Cody*. In signifying the congruence of method found in the novel as it

compares to both jazz and action painting, Hunt writes, “There is the same intense focus on the medium of the art and the imagination, the same sense that texture and motion or the implication of motion is more important than overall architecture. There is the same presence of the personal, the performer” (144). Kerouac’s influences and his play provided by the use of spontaneity in the novel allowed him to occupy and delineate the boundaries found within postwar American culture. Daniel Belgrad, in his book *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America*, further provides elucidation of what these sites of contestation supplied to artists during this time period. He writes, “The social signification of spontaneity can be appreciated only if this aesthetic practice is understood as a crucial site of cultural work: that is, as a set of activities and texts engaged in the struggle over meanings and values within American society” (1). Spontaneity, according to Belgrad, provided artists an oppositional version of humanism, one that benefited the view of intersubjectivity and body-mind holism against corporate liberalism and the established high culture (5). Alongside these resources provided by literary critics and cultural theorists, an approach to Kerouac and culture can be further supplemented by a performance studies approach and the historiography of spontaneity.

Method: Genealogy of Performance

As a means of exploring how Jack Kerouac’s method of spontaneous prose functions relationally to performance culture, my method of analysis takes its cue from the method of historiographical genealogy. In “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Michel Foucault utilizes the work of Nietzsche to promote an incongruent view of histories that promote what he calls “the search of ‘origins.’” (77). Genealogies reject the myth of

origins, replacing the belief in an essence of a thing—e.g., that there is one “true” bloodline—with disparity. According to Foucault, the genealogist will reject the search for origins in favor of “the details and accidents that accompany every beginning . . . it will await their emergence, once unmasked, as the face of the other” (80). Researchers conducting genealogical research trace multiple approaches to the genesis of their subjects. Genealogies approach “a field of entangled and confused parchments on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times” (76). Accordingly, genealogists provoke readings that are not marked by their unity, but by their disparity. They produce work that is culturally specific as to the slips, gaps, and recurrences of the cultural histories that are performed.

In *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach acknowledges the contributions of Foucault’s theory in providing his own formulation of what he calls *performance genealogy*. According to Roach, genealogies of performance “document—and suspect—the historical transmission and dissemination of cultural practices through collective representations” (25). A genealogy of performance both gathers and interprets past performances as well as their representations to inform our understanding regarding their cultural repetition.

In his genealogy of circum-Atlantic performances in *Cities of the Dead*, Roach interprets the cultural performances of New Orleans through burials, parades, effigies, plays and other forms of performance practices, which he argues formulate the collective memory of the region and act as cultural transmitters. Roach restrains the scope of his procedure and its materials in what he calls “narrowly delimited sites” in order to specify and trace cultural memory (13). Through his genealogy of performance, Roach draws

interpretive connections between contemporary performance places and events, such as the Louisiana Superdome and Mardi Gras in New Orleans, and the historical events and performances that he asserts the contemporary representations embody through recall and revival. A genealogy of performance highlights the force and authority of performance practices by tracing their history and their dissemination.

As a means of further delimiting his sites of inquiry, Roach introduces the concepts of surrogation, orature, kinesthetic imagination, vortices of behavior and displaced transmission in order to draw interpretive links between cultural themes and their performance. Roach defines surrogation as “the tendency to substitute one commodity for another by symbolic transfer” (“Slave Spectacles” 170). As a genealogy of performance, certain symbolic commodities try to audition as a stand in for what came before them, making it possible to forget or blur the lines of cultural continuity. As it relates to spontaneity, subjects found in art, writing, music and acting lent themselves to the surrogate search of self-exploration and its expression. Kerouac and his critics have sometimes promoted the view of his own autonomous genius. In doing so, they fail to acknowledge the depth and breadth of historical processes that the author drew upon to formulate his writing method.

Contesting the false dichotomies often introduced via the study of orality and literacy, Roach employs the idea of orature, which he defines as a combination of orality and literary, “a range of forms, which, though they may invest themselves variously . . . are never the less produced alongside or within mediated literacies of various kinds and degrees” (*Cities* 11). As it relates to the relationship between orality and literacy, orature “acknowledges that these modes of communication have produced one another

interactively over time and that their historic operations may be usefully examined under the rubric of performance” (11-12). Kerouac specifically uses such a process in his novels, seeking to blur the line between speech and writing to further his goal of improvised language, much like conversation itself. He utilizes orature to combine and conflate the various traits of orality and literacy in the form of his own spontaneous medium.

Roach introduces the kinesthetic imagination as a site of memory located in the human body and played out through its physical expression (*Cities* 27). He cites the kinesthetic imagination as operating in theatrical performances as well as in everyday lives as a means of behavioral memory and its expansion. The action of bodies becomes the focus as they either adhere to or violate the social norms that are introduced by the culture in which they inhabit. According to Roach, “As a faculty of memory, the kinesthetic imagination exists interdependently but by no means coextensively with other phenomena of social memory” (27). In order to provide evidence of the relationship between the body and its discourse, both the body in action and its cited memory (found in literature, music, painting and other representations of the body) should be addressed.

Vortices of behavior are “places or sites of memory” that function to “canalize specified needs, desires, and habits in order to reproduce them” (Roach, *Cities* 27-8). Roach commonly refers to physical spaces as vortices, noting that they function as “the nodes of commerce and entertainment that draw in the public to certain urban ‘hot spots’” (“Slave Spectacles” 170). Physical spaces actively participate in performance by directing performers’ social networks and the specified roles of their behavior. Roach asserts that “The behavioral vortex of the city center constitutes the collective, social

version of the psychological paradox that masquerade is the most powerful form of self-expression” (“Slave Spectacles” 172).

The final principle outlined by Roach is displaced transmission, which he defines as “the adaptation of historic practices to changing conditions, in which popular behaviors are resituated in new locales” (*Cities* 28). Roach points out that these adaptations not only mimic past performances, but also transform and displace tradition because “no action or sequence of actions may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or created at each appearance. In this improvisational behavioral space, memory reveals itself as imagination” (29). By utilizing past and concurrent performance methods through displaced transmission, artists such as Kerouac attempt to create their own unique stamp on the methods provided by the historical avant-garde in improvised thought and its expression.

Roach articulates that “Improvisation introduces a space for play within memory itself ... for agency within the performative compact of traditions and conventions of restored behavior” (“Kinship, Intelligence, and Memory” 222). As a “space for play,” Kerouac’s writing method of spontaneous prose, because it relies so readily on improvisation, provides a rich resource in articulating how improvisation operates both historically from the past and alongside its various expressions. That each “memory” might quote the other or help in transforming the methods of spontaneous self-inquiry further illustrates the importance of improvisation in the arts and its genealogy of performance.

Significance

To date, the biographical material written about Kerouac's life greatly outweighs sustained critical investigations of his works. This in itself allows performance scholars much room to contribute to studies about Kerouac, and his writing method of spontaneous prose in particular. Conceptualizing Kerouac within a performance framework is not without precedent. English scholars, in particular, have been able to offer background on his use of spontaneity with other postwar artistic genres. But the tendency in research about Jack Kerouac's writing has been to compartmentalize his method of spontaneity with only one aspect of postwar American performance culture, most notably jazz (e.g., Burns; Kart; and Malcolm). While Kerouac scholars have recognized the importance of performance forms, they have mainly used performance itself as an analogy rather than as a critical site of investigation. Performance studies scholars can and should enter into the conversation by explicitly detailing Kerouac's use of spontaneity and connecting it with performance theory itself, thereby providing conceptual tools that Kerouac scholars can use in their approaches to issues of performance and Kerouac in general, and his use of performative writing in particular.

Part of the problem, too, as I mentioned above, is that much Kerouac scholarship focuses on or tries to negotiate the autobiographical impetus of his work. Works such as James T. Jones's *Jack Kerouac's Duluoz Legend*, which reads *all* of Kerouac's writing in light of the Oedipal myth, relies heavily on Kerouac's biography to construct its psychoanalytic reading of the novels. Another biographically informed study is Ben Giamo's *Kerouac, the Word and the Way*, which treats Kerouac's writing in light of his spirituality. Although certainly a contribution to Kerouac studies, and indeed a necessary

starting point in decoding much of Kerouac's work, contributions such as these leave room for other, more culturally informed approaches. Scholars taking up this task include inquiries into traditional cultural studies topics, including Kerouac's negotiation of gender (Leavitt) and race (Grace).

Other contributions made by literary scholars introduce an understanding of Kerouac by means of aesthetic formalism. Of these, Regina Weinreich's *Kerouac's Spontaneous Poetics* remains one of the most sustained literary explorations, as she explains Kerouac's structural styling over the course of several novels. Other formalist approaches tend to treat Kerouac's novels in isolation, as one might expect in formalist criticism, most notably by concentrating on his most popular novel, *On the Road*. Some of these studies include *On the Road's* approach to temporality (Mortenson), irony (Ellis), and rhetoricity (Swartz). These studies provide a necessary component in understanding that Kerouac wrote at a level of literary density far greater than the "novice" label that many of his earlier critics leveled at him. But these approaches would also benefit from a more deductive approach to the writing method itself to show the development of Kerouac's artistry as a whole.

Projects such as Tim Hunt's *Kerouac's Crooked Road* provide a more comprehensive analysis of Kerouac and his writing, one that specifically addresses his use of spontaneous prose. In the foreword of the latest edition of *Crooked Road*, Kerouac's most dedicated biographer and critic Ann Charters writes of the book that, "Tim Hunt's study of Jack Kerouac's writing is the first, best—and only indispensable—guide that explains this American author's achievement as an important and original prose stylist" (ix). Hunt's contribution continues to be found in his ability to trace

Kerouac's literary and stylistic forebears, while at the same time recognizing what it is that is unique and propitious in Kerouac's authorship. Even with his work being recognized as one of the first and finest examples of Kerouac literary scholarship, Hunt himself recognizes the need for further inquiry. He writes in the preface of his new edition, "I hoped that what became *Crooked Road* would create a context that would support—and encourage—further critical exploration of Kerouac's work" (xvi). Hunt writes specifically of the limitations of his study when he asserts of his thesis regarding Kerouac that, "My account of his determination to push beyond the confines of the novel ... doesn't go far enough.... Kerouac's experimentalism needs to be approached culturally—not just biographically and aesthetically as it is in this study" (Preface xvii-xviii). My analysis proposes to accomplish this task, and where my study differs from other Kerouac scholarship it does so by engaging the discourses of spontaneity as they relate specifically to performance theory proper. While it was Hunt who was one of the first to diagnose Kerouac's writing as a means of performance, especially as it relates to jazz and abstract expressionism, he himself did not have the benefit of much of the performance studies scholarship written within the last two decades. Performance studies itself and the ideas generated by means of performance theory have grown significantly since 1981, the original date of Hunt's publication. By shifting the focus of Kerouac's performances in light of the contributions made by performance studies scholarship, a significant contribution can be made in understanding how Kerouac's work functions as performance. By treating the issue of performance in a sustained and critical manner, this study goes beyond the metaphorical associations of Kerouac's work as performance made by other literary scholars.

This study's approach to the history of the avant-garde is also important. Traditionally researchers have treated the avant-garde in terms of its European predecessors and its methodological contributions to art and performance. Rose Lee Goldberg's *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* is a case in point. In her book Goldberg traces the syllogistic progression of the major historical movements including Futurism, Dada, Surrealism and finally, twentieth century performance practices. Although Goldberg's book provides a solid basis for an introduction to the historical avant-garde, especially European movements, the book fails to address a systematic understanding of the postwar American avant-garde. The Beats and Jack Kerouac are never mentioned at all, nor is the prevalent use of spontaneous mediumship, which is problematic as it can be seen as an important pedagogical instrument in our understanding of the historiography of the avant-garde.

Although scholars such as Goldberg provide a useful diachronic model in our understanding of the historical avant-garde, scholars such as Daniel Belgrad provide a much-needed supplement. In *The Culture of Spontaneity*, Belgrad offers a synchronic understanding of spontaneity as it was used throughout the various arts in postwar America. The book thus presents an excellent resource for the genealogist, as it shows how cultural processes functioned within the groundwork of postwar artistry. The emergence of this postwar artistic culture provides the jumping off point for this study to understand how Kerouac functions as a cultural actor. Whereas Belgrad treats the Beats as a whole within one chapter of his extensive cultural study, I use the figure of Jack Kerouac and his writing as a centering point for my study. In making this turn the unveiling of the American avant-garde and of performance history will be supplemented

even further by focusing on how a seminal artist was influenced and helped in shaping a tradition of performance art.

This study also provides a much-needed contribution to our understanding of Jack Kerouac and the Beats for a performance studies audience. As of the time of this writing there is only one published article in performance studies that approaches the subject, Lee Hudson's "Poetics in Performance: The Beat Generation." In the article Hudson treats the Beats as a wide-ranging group of poets whose poetry reemphasized an oral based tradition. Although the article valorizes the Beats as an important part of performance history, much more can and should be addressed from a performance perspective. My study contributes theoretically towards this need by approaching Kerouac from a genealogy of performance perspective. The Beats, and Kerouac's work in particular, address an array of issues that performance epistemology is interested in. In particular, this study situates Kerouac as an actor whose work provides a means of addressing the historicity of the avant-garde and one of its main forms of artistic agency, performative writing.

As its own disparate genealogy shows, earlier criticism of Kerouac seems to be motivated by the same misappropriations of the Beat moniker with which he labeled his generation. Although there is still no collective acceptance of any definitive explanation of the term, the term "beat" itself has been attributed to Herbert Huncke, a small time petty thief and junkie who was in the Beats' inner circle. Huncke related the term to being robbed or cheated. Of the term Huncke states, "I meant beaten. The world against me" (Watson 3). In 1948 Kerouac and friend John Clellon Holmes were discussing the merits and plight of their generation and Kerouac suggested the term beat. Holmes liked

the expression, and in 1952 his novel *Go* was published and that same year his article, “This is the Beat Generation,” appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* (Tytell 217). Holmes’s article stirred up more than four hundred letters in response to it. At this point, “the article galvanized the public, the media, and the people at the core of it all... The movement now had a single label—Beat—like it or not” (Whitmer and Wyngarden 52). Beat writer and biographer John Tytell explains the term by stating, “Beat begins with a sense of cultural displacement and disaffiliation, a distrust of official ‘truth,’ an awareness that things are often not what they seem to be” (55). Later, Kerouac would relate Beat to the beatitudes to add a spiritual element to its understanding.

Riding the crest of interest generated by Holmes’s article, a significant chain of events happened to increase the visibility of the Beat authors. Allen Ginsberg crossed the continent from New York City and arrived in San Francisco in 1954. At the time, the city by the bay had its own established literary scene. There was a rejuvenation of interest in poetry and audiences grew throughout the North Beach area. In San Francisco, Ginsberg flourished, and it was there that he decided to become a poet full-time after having to take odd jobs for his entire adult life. It was also here that Ginsberg wrote *Howl*, a defining moment for himself and a critical point in the growing development of the Beat movement.

According to Ann Charters, “Shortly after its composition he decided to organize a poetry reading on October 7, 1955 at the Six Gallery, a cooperative art gallery in San Francisco” (*Portable* xxvii). Other poets reading that night were west coast poets Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Phillip Whalen and, Phillip Lamantini. Jack Kerouac was also in attendance but declined to read, passing around jugs of red wine instead and

spurring the readers on. But it was Ginsberg who would steal the show this particular night. After his performance of *Howl* Kerouac told Ginsberg it would make him famous in San Francisco. Kenneth Rexroth amended that by stating, “No, this poem will make you famous from bridge to bridge” (Halberstam 306). It turned out to be a prophetic statement, one that would not only ring true for Ginsberg, but for the Beats as well.

After the initial reading Ginsberg was offered a publication deal by City Lights Bookstore owner Lawrence Ferlinghetti. City Lights, named after the Charlie Chaplin film, was an important cultural spot in the literary scene. It was the first bookstore dedicated to the sale of paperback books and published many alternative artistic works. In May of 1957 *Howl* was published and sales were good. They got a lot better when two plain-clothes officers bought the book at City Lights and charged the owner with obscenity.

On May 21, 1957, Police Captain William Hanrahan ordered the arrest of publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Shigeyoshi Murao, the bookstore manager who sold *Howl* to the two officers (Watson 251). The American Civil Liberties Union saw an important First-Amendment case in the works and sent a team of lawyers to defend the publisher. In October of that same year Judge W. J. Clayton Horn cleared the defendants of obscenity charges.

The trial drew even more national attention to the Beats and their writing. During that same decade other censorship battles included those against *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner, and controversy was stirring up over the comedy of Lenny Bruce and the hip gestures of Elvis Presley (Sterritt *Mad* 107). When *Howl* was cleared of obscenity charges it sold thousands of copies across the country. Ann Charters writes of the

significance of the *Howl* trial when she notes, “The Beats, as represented by Ginsberg, had joined forces with the San Francisco poets, as represented by Ferlinghetti, and the Beat Generation literary cluster was about to go into orbit” (*Portable* xxviii). Now that the Beat tag had landed in San Francisco, the movement was embodied in both coasts. With the publication of a book about life on the American highways, it was about to become well known everywhere in the heartland as well.

After receiving attention from publishers after his reading of *Howl*, Ginsberg decided to share some of the attention and introduced Kerouac to Viking publishers. Two years later in 1957 *On the Road* was published, the same year *Howl* was first seized for obscenity. It too became a hot commodity, peaking at number eleven on the bestseller list, where it stayed for five weeks (Watson 253). Based on the successes of *Howl* and *On the Road* even more attention came from the popular media. Journalists swarmed down on the San Francisco North Beach to find out more about the Beats and their generation.

At first there was considerable confusion regarding what the actual term Beat meant. Foster writes that “Journalists ... decided that anyone who lived and wrote in North Beach must be part of the same revolution, and soon America thought so, too” (2). One particular label coming out of the popular press stuck because of an event the same year *On the Road* was first published. Herb Caen, columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, coined the term “beatnik” after the 1957 Russian launching of the Sputnik, asserting that like the new bohemians, both were “equally far out” (Watson 4). With the term beatnik and the general popularity of the Beat literary works, came the inevitable commercialization of their image.

Instead of focusing on their literary merits, which many critics panned because of new writing techniques such as Kerouac's spontaneous prose and William Burroughs's cut up technique, the media focused on the perceived appearance of the Beats instead. A typical summary of Beat fashion is offered by Oakley when he writes, "Beat males wore khaki pants or jeans, sweaters, sandals or well-worn sneakers, beards.... Beat women wore black leotards, no lipstick, and so much eyeshadow that they came to be called 'raccoons'" (398). The life style of the Beats became just as contrived by the media. Beatniks were depicted as living in small "pads," in addition to hanging out in coffeehouses, smoking pot, listening to bad poetry, and fawning over non-western religious texts.

Besides the mass media, Hollywood as well used the popularity of the Beats to cash in on beatnik commercialization. The best-known example of this was probably the character of Maynard G. Krebs in the television series *The Many Lives of Dobie Gillis*, which ran from 1959 to 1963. Sterritt writes of the character that, "Maynard wore a goatee, a floppy sweatshirt, and sneakers wherever he went.... His least favorite activity was work, and his yelp of plaintive echolalia—'WORK!?!'—erupted whenever this syllable was uttered in his presence" (*Mad* 168). Other shows tried to capture perceived Beat coolness, such as CBS' *Route 66*, a direct rip off of the characters and story of *On the Road*. Sterritt notes of the show that "the 1949 Hudson of Dean and Sal became the 1960 Chevrolet Corvette of Buzz and Todd, who roamed the American roadways on a weekly basis in search of 'a place where we really fit—a kind of a niche for ourselves, you know?'" (*Mad* 165).

With so much popularity came parody, and the introduction of the Beatnik character quickly began to wane in popular culture. According to Oakley, “Beat culture quickly lost its freshness and became a stylized, ritualized culture.... In San Francisco and other cities it was possible to buy a Beatnik ‘kit’—complete with sandals, pants, shirts, and a book of terminology” (402). The same popular culture that the Beats utilized as part of their literary heritage soon appropriated the Beats themselves in the form of beatnik caricatures. Sterritt writes, “small wonder that *Mad* magazine kiddingly portrayed the Beats as ultraconformist in the purest ‘50s style, sporting indistinguishable beards and identical sloppy clothing that locked them into patterns of appearance ... every bit as rigid as those of the ‘squares’ they so scathingly spurned” (*Mad* 103). The commercialization of Beatnik lifestyle served to ingest the Beats and their messages at the same rate in which Ray Kroc was trying to get the American public to gulp down his new McDonald’s hamburgers. Instead of consulting Beat literary works, which were the sources of such bastardized depictions, Americans were encouraged to look at beatniks as if they were animals in a petting zoo.

Early critics of Kerouac were equally skewed by beatnik stereotypes. Truman Capote’s labeled Kerouac’s writing technique as “typewriting” rather than writing, which qualified him as a kind of Maynard G. Krebs, a kind of literary character incapable of serious work (Hunt, Preface xiii). Norman Podhoretz uses the same corporeal stereotype of the beatnik kit in describing Kerouac’s “photogenic countenance” that appeared on one of his novels, writing that it is “unshaven, of course, and topped by an unruly crop of rich black hair falling over his forehead.” By means of these mediated images, he asks his readers to slide down the slippery slope of popular inference. He argues:

Being for or against what the Beat Generation stands for has to do with denying that incoherence is superior to precision; that ignorance is superior to knowledge; that the exercise of mind and discrimination is a form of death.... It even has to do with fighting the poisonous glorification of the adolescent in American popular culture. It has to do, in other words, with being for or against intelligence itself. (318)

In addition to the *Howl* and, later, *Naked Lunch* obscenity trials, such inferences actually flamed the fuels of associating Kerouac and the Beats as symbols, and later as sources, of the counterculture in America. But it too damages the legacy of Kerouac in inferring that he is best understood as against intellectualism. Perhaps for such reasons, then, earlier critics had not been as readily interested in the contributions of Kerouac's writing method to our understanding of the novel.

Towards the end of his literary career and life Jack Kerouac wrote, "In my old age I intend to collect all my work and re-insert my pantheon of uniform names, leave the long shelf full of books there, and die happy" (Preface *Big Sur*). Here Kerouac refers to the corpus of his autobiographical writing, known collectively as what he refers to as "The Duluoze Legend." These novels tell the story of Kerouac's life from early childhood until later into adulthood. The books use many of the same characters based on real life acquaintances, the names of which Kerouac had to often change at the urging of his publishers. Just as incongruous as the name changes Kerouac used are the quality by which the author was able to accomplish his method of spontaneous prose in the novels themselves. This study approaches the study of Kerouac's spontaneous prose by analyzing three novels from the larger Duluoze legend that were written during the period from 1950-53, his most feverish years of production. "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," *On the Road*, *Visions of Cody*, and *Doctor Sax* are chosen because they were written chronologically, and, the three novels in particular show the trajectory that Kerouac was

trying to accomplish. After the publication of Kerouac's *Road* novel in 1957, his life drastically changed, and many of his novels were pressured by publication expectations to provide literary repetition, hoping to cash in on the success of his *Road* narrative. This, and Kerouac's spiraling decline due to alcoholism and literary infamy later in life, make his earlier works the most appropriate vehicles to understand his spontaneous writing method itself. Kerouac clearly felt that these earlier novels were an important documentation of his work's fruition, and as a result, I try to honor the author's request that they be discussed in light of his inventive artistic practice.

Chapter Outline

In approaching Kerouac's writing method by means of performance genealogy, this study outlines the cultural processes that influenced the invention and practice of spontaneous prose. The relative success and failure by which the author was able to incorporate the tenets of spontaneous prose is tracked over the course of three separate literary performances of the novel. As its genealogy shows, Kerouac's problem was being able to balance the experimental form of his spontaneous prose with the content of novelistic story telling.

In the following chapter, Chapter Two, I analyze the relationship of Kerouac's method of spontaneous prose to similar methods found within postwar American performance cultures. Drawing on Roach's tools regarding performance genealogies, narrative theory, and differing artistic genres, I consider Kerouac's "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" as performance as it relates to and enhances our understanding of Jack Kerouac and the postwar American landscape. This chapter frames Kerouac's

“Essentials” text as a synecdoche for other postwar arts, and specifically addresses the role performative writing plays in his writing method.

Chapters Three through Five track the dissemination of Kerouac’s writing method over the course of three separate novels. Chapter Three approaches Kerouac’s most popular novel, *On the Road*. Within this chapter I argue that Kerouac’s *Road* novel is best understood as a developmental production of his spontaneous method, one where the author has not yet mastered what he was able to accomplish in latter novels. The novel is an exercise in the mediation of the subject of spontaneity rather than an enactment of spontaneity by means of literary form. Drawing upon literary historicity, I link Kerouac’s modernistic novel to the tradition of both romance and picaresque traditions. Drawing upon Victor Turner and Richard Schechner’s theory of liminality and the liminoid, I break down Kerouac’s exploration of the “IT” of spontaneity topically in reference to the novel. The novel’s tropes of time, space, and personal identity are explored as a means of understanding the cultural milieu in which Kerouac was historically operating.

Chapter Four explores Kerouac’s most experimental novel, *Visions of Cody*. Within the framework of this study, the novel is explored as a transitional document, one where Kerouac transforms his work from the modern tradition to that of the postmodern. Drawing upon the same subject material of *On the Road*, Kerouac is able to achieve performative writing that goes beyond spontaneous representation to that of enactment. This chapter explores the constructs of the novel’s performative fiction, one where Kerouac more readily explores the ontology of his subjects and his writing method. But the novel itself often times fails due to the excesses of the separate experiments

themselves, and the novel reads as a record of processes rather than as a sustained narrative. Despite the excesses of the novel, the book itself is an important genealogical artifact regarding the development of Kerouac's writing method, especially as it relates to the performative writing that Kerouac was trying to accomplish.

Chapter Five investigates Kerouac's own favorite novel, *Doctor Sax: Faust Part Three*. Drawing upon Diana Taylor's theory of historiographical scenario, and Gregory Ulmer's performative writing contribution of "Mystory," I understand the novel to be an intertextual document that achieves the balance between form and content by means of spontaneity that Kerouac had earlier been striving for. By drawing upon separate personal and cultural discourses, *Dr. Sax* is able to achieve what his earlier novels had not, a novel length performance of spontaneity in both form and content. The Chapter draws conclusions into how Kerouac's mystoriographical voice of spontaneity articulates a position that goes beyond self-inductive expression into that of collective representation.

Chapter Six concludes the study with a discussion of Kerouac's writing method and its genealogical implications in the study of performative writing. In sum and substance, this chapter draws conclusions about the performance of spontaneity as it is found in the figure of Jack Kerouac and the historical processes from which he was writing. Furthermore, the analysis looks at the legacy of Kerouac and spontaneous prose, addressing how his influence and use of spontaneity circulates in our understanding of the avant-garde and its use of performative writing.

Chapter Two: The “Essentials” of Spontaneity

First documented as a favor to friends Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs to explain his compositional method and later published in the Autumn 1957 issue of the *Black Mountain Review*, “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose” remains Kerouac’s only substantive reflection on his textual praxis. By the time of its initial writing in 1953, Kerouac had transformed himself from writing in the style of Thomas Wolfe and publishing *The Town and the City* in 1950, to discovering and writing in his spontaneous mode. Over the course of this same time period, he had begun or finished at least six other novels, including *On the Road*, *Visions of Cody*, and *Dr. Sax*, an enormous literary output. Kerouac was enthused by his newly discovered literary process, one that abandoned the established literary process of careful meditation on structure and sentence form.

Kerouac’s discovery of his writing method happened as a result of two chance happenings in life, both of which came together in 1951 to trigger his desire to write in a new style after the lukewarm reception of *The Town and the City*. Kerouac’s first discovery, what Foucault calls the genealogical “accident,” came from his most consistent literary muse, Neal Cassady, the subject of both *On the Road* and *Visions of Cody*. On December 23, 1950, Cassady sent Kerouac a rambling, extensive handwritten letter detailing his sexual exploits of Christmas in 1946, which he intended to include as part of his life story in the novel he was working on at the urging of Kerouac and Ginsberg (Kerouac, *Selected Letters 1940* 356). What was to become known as the “Joan Anderson” letter had a deeply moving effect on Kerouac, and, as a result of its composition, Kerouac renounced his earlier stylistic forebears and resolved to trust free

association and his own life as worthy artistic subjects. The second source of Kerouac's literary method came from a chance comment from architect friend Ed White in 1951 that Kerouac should sketch his subjects like a painter, only with words (Kerouac, *Selected Letters* 1940 356). Kerouac took this advice, and, as a result, he began to distance himself from preconceived approaches to his subjects, allowing him to focus on recording the fluidity of his imagination. After fusing these influences in 1951, the next two years would mark the most prodigious workload of Kerouac's entire writing career.

Only after such a rush of artistic output was he finally willing to share with his friends his thoughts on his literary process, which he outlines in his "Essentials." His only other attempt, "Belief & Technique of Modern Prose," which was first published in 1959, is a much more terse and self-parodic to-do list (e.g., "3. Try never get drunk outside yr own house" 72). In what follows, I analyze the "Essentials" text as a cultural artifact that functions as a performance genealogy, one that highlights both past performance-based avant-garde practices and Kerouac's own contemporaneously connected practices in this regard.

In addition to the largely metaphorical definition of writing as performance provided by Poirier, this chapter begins the process of delineating what makes Kerouac's experimental use of spontaneous prose different from other performances of the novel. Instead of relying exclusively on textual citations where Kerouac describes performances, the focus on Kerouac's writing method is supplemented here by providing a more deductive understanding of the writing method as a whole. That is, instead of focusing on what spontaneity *describes* (what the stories tell about), the focus of this chapter is to explicate what it *does* (the writing method itself). By drawing upon theories regarding

performative writing, this chapter provides a culturally informed approach to Kerouac's writing method to explain the significance of his experimental impetus.

The chapter first situates Kerouac's "Essentials" within the culture of the postwar avant-garde to fulfill Foucault's prompt regarding the many "faces" of historical emergence. Viewed in this light, Kerouac's "Essentials" reveals that his prose appropriates its techniques from a number of emergent postwar artistic genres and can also be read, in part, as a postwar artistic manifesto, where multiple voices are represented and echoed as part of the same cultural revolt that centers on spontaneity. In what follows, I draw on specific genealogical tools supplied by Roach and a variety of narrative theories in order to analyze topically (rather than chronologically) the performative implications of "Essentials." Section one details Kerouac's approach to sketching and timing within historical artistic practice and as a literary chronotope. The second section relates Kerouac's method as a symbolic substitute, one that "confesses" itself as a ventriloquial voice from music and acting methods. Section three situates spontaneity as a go-between among the discourses of orality and literacy, where jazz in particular is appropriated as a model for literary technique. The final section locates Kerouac's prose as a textual mediation of the body, one that performs its actions from the body's imaginative memory. My hope is that this discussion will contribute to our understanding of Kerouac's prose as a unique place of culturally wrought performance-based practices. The study then goes on in subsequent chapters to explore separate novels as case studies regarding the fidelity of the writing method he outlines in "Essentials."

In a series of lectures given at Harvard University in 1955, and later published as *How To Do Things With Words*, the linguistic philosopher J. L. Austin differentiates between two types of utterances. The first class is constative, which Austin defines as a group of utterances that say something. These utterances say something to be the case, such as “It is sunny today.” Since these statements rely upon precursory conditions, they can be confirmed or disconfirmed by comparing what the utterance claims to be the case with what actually is the case. To check the validity of the weather claim, for instance, one merely has to go outside.

Unlike constative utterances, performative utterances actually do the thing described in them, and in so doing they often times seek to bring a new condition into the world in which they are uttered. Austin’s best known example of the performative utterance occurs at a wedding ceremony. “I now pronounce you man and wife,” spoken by someone granted the authority, produces a new condition, one where the community at large recognizes two people as being legally married. A person witnessing such a ceremony would not likely report that “he said he pronounced them husband and wife.” Instead, the person would more likely state “he pronounced them man and wife.” In this case, instead of reporting a precursory condition, the utterance of the pronouncement *does* what is being said. According to Austin, such statements could not be judged on their truth or falsity, but rather in terms of their felicity conditions. Performative utterances are either “happy” or “unhappy” depending upon the felicity conditions that are ascribed by the social, contextual, and discursive preconditions that must be met in order for these utterances to have force or effect (Austin, “How” 148). Shift the context

of our wedding utterance to, say, a pair of lizards, and the pronouncement loses its performative force.

In her essay “Performing Writing,” Della Pollock abdicates any clear definitional quality of performative writing, focusing instead on its separate qualities. She thus postulates six attributes of performative writing: evocation, metonymy, subjectivity, nervousness, citationality, and consequentiality. She explains that “performative writing is not a genre or fixed form (as a textual model might suggest) but a way of describing what some good writing *does*.... Holding ‘performative writing’ to set shapes and meanings would be (1) to undermine its analytic flexibility, and (2) to betray the possibilities of performativity with the limitations of referentiality” (75). Like Austin, Pollock is interested in the felicity conditions that mark the discursive practice of performative writing as being both “good” and “bad.” Pollock also cites historical and cultural performatives as having an important role into how these felicity conditions are made malleable. She argues that:

What I want to call performative writing is thus both a means and an effect of conflict. It is particularly (paradoxically) ‘effective.’.... It reflects in its own forms, in its own fulfillment of form, in what amounts to its performance of itself, a particular, historical relation (agonistic, dialogic, erotic) between author-subjects, reading subjects, and subjects written/read. Performative writing is thus no more and no less formally intelligible than a road sign or a landmark: its styles may be numbered, taught, and reproduced, but its meanings are contextual. It takes its value from the context-map in which it is located and which it simultaneously marks, determines, transforms. (78-9)

Following this prompt, this study conceptualizes the “doing” of spontaneity, and thus its performative force, within the larger cultural framework of postwar America and its historical antecedents.

Theorists and practitioners of performative writing gravitate towards issues of ontological representation, the voice and body included. An ongoing debate by performance scholars remains what constitutes an authentic form of live performance, an ontology seemingly separate from other forms of reproducible acts. Peggy Phelan argues that “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance” (*Unmarked* 146). According to this perspective, performance loses its ontological value once it has been permeated by technological reproduction, writing technologies included. Other voices represented in this study, including Joseph Roach, Walter Ong, Gregory Ulmer, Phillip Auslander, and Diana Taylor, argue that this stance is too essentialist, that false dichotomies such as orality and literacy ignore how each have helped produce one another interactively over time.

In her essay “The Aesthetic of the Unfinished: Ethics and Performance,” Mindy Fenske suggests that the dialectic between “corporeality and virtuality” is itself unanswerable. That is, it tends to shut down generative responses to the question of form and content. She argues that by constructing and holding up these binaries dialogic encounter is negligible. Ethically, Fenske suggests, performance should reveal its “unfinished” quality, regardless of whether it is “live” or “mediated,” “in that it suggests that meaning has yet to be determined, that form is an act of construction with specific risks and obligation, and that the conversation within form/representation is ongoing” (15). This study participates in this ongoing conversation by tracing the ontological implications of Kerouac’s spontaneous prose. Kerouac’s use of performative writing,

both its successes and failures, adheres to and confronts the ontological issues of performative presence in the novel. His writing method in turn provides another means by which we might understand what it means to do performative writing and what this writing does both to him and to us.

Sketching Time

“22. Dont think of words when you stop but to see picture better.
23. Keep track of every day the date emblazoned in yr morning”
(Kerouac “Belief” 72).

To begin his subject of “Essentials,” Kerouac writes of the “Set-Up” that “The object is set before the mind, either in reality, as in sketching (before a landscape or teacup or old face) or is set in the memory wherein it becomes the sketching from memory of a definite image-object” (69). This first section relates the author’s affinity for direct observation and immediacy between the writer and subject. The “image-object” is later referred to in the “Center of Interest” section where he writes, “Begin not from preconceived idea of what to say about image but from jewel center of interest in subject of image at *moment* of writing” (70). Approaching his “image-objects” or “jewel centers” in the *now* via spontaneous sketching allowed Kerouac to produce meaning on more than one level, documenting multiple lines of thought as they happen between himself and the object of his sketches. Such an approach allowed Kerouac to distinguish himself from other writers by abandoning established *a priori* analytical approaches to the novel (for instance, by outlining plot development). For Kerouac, the immediacy of sketching dictated the flow of language as it was happening, not beforehand.

Kerouac’s approach to performative timing is not communicating an already-discovered reality; it is offering a record of the discovery of a reality. Kerouac began his

method by approaching individual objects, sketching his subjects like a painter approaching a singular canvas. Later he was able to place his sketches up against one another to document the process of consciousness in writing even further. Hunt argues, “Each sketch is a discrete performance, but these performances are arranged to suggest actions for the sketcher” (474). Kerouac functions as both the actor and director of his performance compositions, leading him into the discovery of what he deemed “wild form.” In a letter to John Clellon Holmes dated June 5, 1952, Kerouac writes, “What I am beginning to discover now is something beyond the novel and beyond the arbitrary confines of the story ... into the realms of revealed Picture ... revealed prose ... *wild form*, man, *wild form*. Wild form’s the only form holds what I have to say—my mind is exploding to say something about every image and every memory in” (*Selected Letters* 1940 371). Through the process of delineation, Kerouac was able to trace verbal pictures within the confines of the novel, and visual culture has much to do in further understanding the role sketching has in his writing and postwar American culture.

Kerouac’s description of his sketching technique articulates Roach’s idea of displaced transmission, or, put differently, the adaptation of historic practices in new locales (*Cities* 28). The Impressionists of the 19th century, including Monet, Renoir, Degas, and Cézanne, have been linked as predecessors of Kerouac’s approach to discourse. Matt Theado observes of Kerouac’s description of sketching that it “recalls the habit of Impressionist painters ... who lugged their palettes and easels out of the studios so that they could paint landscapes with immediacy and from direct observation” (34). Such a move by the Impressionists allowed them to record the visual impression of a scene

rather than what they knew about it, and this approach enhanced the art by drawing attention to the importance of the play of light and color.

The Impressionists hoped to create what Monet called “a spontaneous work rather than a calculated one,” and the work was in response to the established norms of representational likenesses of natural objects (Dempsey 15). The apparent sketch-like quality and unfinished presentation of their work was, at first, rejected by the established art community. Later, however, the work was celebrated for showing the fleeting nature that the impression of natural subjects has on our perception. That there is an ostensible stasis that plays out between the aestheticized representational “real” and the presentational interpretive is an argument that continues to transmit throughout the contested spaces of historical culture. Foucault writes of these dramas that they occur in a historical “non-place,” that they are endlessly repeated plays of dominations where no one is responsible for an emergence, and where no one person can glory in an emergence because it always occurs in the interstice (85). The achievement made by the dissemination of sketching allowed both the Impressionists and Kerouac to fluctuate between the depictions of objects as both objectified representations of reality and subjective interpretations. The performance of this dialogue allows the reader to participate in the meaning making process, furthering the chain of transmission regarding the perception of subject. His ability, then, to see the “picture better,” as a result of this displaced transmission, helped Kerouac because he was able to borrow one discourse and place it into a different literary interstice.

In addition to his approach to literary sketching, another central reproduction relating to Kerouac’s prose is his approach to timing. In “Lag in Producere” (sic) he argues, “No

pause to think of proper word but the infantile pileup of scatological buildup words till satisfaction is gained which will turn out to be a great appending rhythm with Great Law of timing” (“Essentials” 69-70). Time and how to note it, particularly in the “now,” are further explained in his “Timing” section where he writes, “Nothing is muddy that *runs in time* and to laws of *time* – Shakespearian stress of dramatic need to speak now in own unalterable way or forever hold tongue”(70). Kerouac defended his approach to the now of writing because he felt it approached, more accurately, the truth and its record found in any given moment.

Kerouac’s approach to the now of timing allowed him to work vertically rather than horizontally. Hunt articulates this approach in certain Kerouac sketches: “The passage has no narrative action and little or no ‘horizontal’ or linear motion from one point to another. Rather, it relies on the associational logic of the speaker to build up the implications of the initial image” (*Crooked* 129). Kerouac’s reliance on the synchronic moment allowed him to move freely in and out of time and across space whenever his associative logic dictated it, a transcendent move often bordering on the utopian. A passage from *On the Road* is exemplary:

I walked around, picking butts from the street.... I looked down Market Street. I didn’t know whether it was that or Canal Street in New Orleans: it led to water, ambiguous universal water, just as 42nd Street, New York, leads to water, and you never know where you are.... And for just a moment I had reached the point of ecstasy that I always wanted to reach, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows.... I realized that I had died and been reborn numberless times but just didn’t remember especially because the transitions from life to death and back to life are so ghostly easy.... I felt sweet, swinging bliss, like a big shot of heroin to the mainline vein; like a gulp of wine late in the afternoon and it makes you shudder; my feet tingled. I thought I was going to die the very next moment. But I didn’t die.... I was too young to know what had happened. (172-3)

Of course such a “point of ecstasy” is fleeting and, because of its nature, Kerouac often had to return to it and similar subjects in the form of repetition in his novels. As a result, Kerouac’s spatio-temporal reality places its emphasis in the present at the expense of the future, an example of Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of the utopian chronotope of historical inversion.

Bakhtin uses the chronotope to discuss how both time and space are represented in novelistic discourse and how this representability provides a rhetoricity by which readers come to familiarize themselves with the lived experience of the novel. One of the means by which Bakhtin measures the value of a chronotope is its ability to measure “real historical time and space” with “actual historical persons in such a time and space” (*Dialogic* 84). Although he never puts a definitive qualitative stamp on the ordering of differing chronotopes, he is genuinely critical of those chronotopes that produce a sense of time and space that do not flesh out real historical time and a genuine sense of becoming. Kerouac places the importance of his spatio-temporal prose within the now of his timing sections, a spontaneous chronotope that allows the author and reader a transcendental worldview found within vertical rather than horizontal discourse. This utopia of the novel, like that in the biographical life of the author and/or reader, is experienced in flashes rather than in longevity and, because of its ephemeral nature, the role of repetition becomes mandatory in making spontaneity happen again and again, albeit in the re-discovery of its representation. About this, Bakhtin would be critical, and he writes specifically against such a utopian chronotope in his discussion of historical inversion. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson paraphrase: “For there to be a real sense of becoming, according to Bakhtin, the future, and especially the immediate or near

future in which we concretely act, must be as.... one in which the actions that each of us undertake actually count” (397). Historical inversion places the importance of time and space in the past and/or present at the expense of such a future. Kerouac’s spontaneous chronotope is guilty of such an inversion because it finds every area of ideal or value in the moment of writing and in experiencing. The author functions ahistorically through the process of Roach’s displaced transmission by continually trying to re-invent the past through the same sequence of actions wrought by his performance of spontaneity. This is to deny the fullness of time, according to Bakhtin, and against such re-invented moments he writes, “Where there is no passage of time there is also no *moment* of time, in the full and most essential meaning of the word” (*Dialogic* 146). Kerouac’s reliance upon the present in his vertical approach was not completely removed from past or future realities, but it was not so concerned with the future as it was the re-discovery of memory as it related to his past autobiographical experience.

This is typical of the distinction between vertical and horizontal approaches according to Bakhtin. He notes:

There is a greater readiness to build a superstructure for reality (the present) along a vertical axis of upper and lower than to move forward along the horizontal axis of time. Should these vertical structurings turn out as well to be other-worldly idealistic, eternal, outside time, then this extratemporal and eternal quality is perceived as something simultaneous with a given moment in the present; it is something contemporaneous, and that which already exists is perceived as better than the future (which does not yet exist and which never did exist). From the point of view of a present reality, historical inversion (in the strict sense of the word) prefers the past—which is more weighty, more fleshed out—to such a future. (*Dialogic* 148)

This is a genuine source of criticism of Kerouac’s character within his novels and in his biographical life, as someone who was never fully capable of mustering a substantive

future. As a result, Kerouac died of alcoholism at the age of forty-seven, and his was a life that would, in turn, foreshadow much of the repetition of individualistic excess of the 1960s. Kerouac's performativity of the vertical axis became a source of uniform contempt from his contemporary critics, who oftentimes overlooked and attacked its literary merits on the basis of its perceived social consequence.

The most vehement of these accusations came from Norman Podhoretz, who announced his prejudice in the title of his essay, "The Know-Nothing Bohemians." Podhoretz reduces Kerouac's timing in prose to pure pathos, stating, "Strictly speaking, spontaneity is a quality of feeling, not of writing: when we call a piece of writing spontaneous, we are registering our impression that the author hit upon the right words without sweating, that no 'art' and no calculation entered into the picture" (314). This is of course a gross oversimplification of the work that the composition process dictates, but echoes the bias hurled at Kerouac when colleagues such as Capote called his work typing rather than writing. Podhoretz continues his critique and calls on his own displaced transmission of history by aligning Kerouac's "feeling" based spontaneity with the postwar culture's obsession with perceived youth based violence. He claims:

History after all—and especially the history of modern times—teaches that there is a close connection between ideologies of primitivistic vitalism and a willingness to look upon cruelty and blood-letting with complacency, if not downright enthusiasm. The reason I bring this up is that the spirit of hipsterism and the Beat Generation strikes me as the same spirit which animated the young savages in leather jackets who have been running amuck in the last few years with their switch-blades and zip guns. (318)

Podhoretz places Kerouac's reluctance or inability to invest in the future in direct contrast with mainstream culture's values of working hard and saving for the future. He conjures the supposed dueling chronotopes as having the most deadly consequence, stating, "Even

the relatively mild ethos of Kerouac's books can spill over easily into brutality for there is a suppressed cry in those books: Kill the intellectuals who can talk coherently, kill the people who can sit still for five minutes at a time, kill those incomprehensible characters who can get seriously involved with a woman, a job, a cause" (318). Such an extreme indictment of the supposed ability of Kerouac's spontaneous chronotope to rhetorically "kill" the postwar culture's majority highlights the power by which the chronotope produces diverging social discourses out of the novel.

To be sure, Kerouac's spontaneous chronotope seemed to market itself as separate from that of the one encouraged by the American mainstream. Kerouac and the Beats marked themselves via hyper-individuality in contrast to the perceived shackles of domesticity and the consumer culture of postwar America. Curiously this dichotomy was actually based on similar common denominators regulating an approach to historical performativity of time. This can be a common feature of separate chronotopes of culture and Bakhtin notes that "Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, re-place or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships" (*Dialogic* 252). Part of the interwoven fabric that Kerouac and the mainstream culture shared was the approach to the historical now of timing.

This was nowhere truer than in the consumer culture of postwar America. After the Allies' victory in WWII, the war machine turned its attention to production at home, sparking the baby boom and expansion of the country's domestic economy. In what he cites as a "culture of abundance," Belgrad notes the role corporate liberalism played within the consumptive practices of American citizens. He writes, "Corporate liberalism

is a social and economic arrangement that has predominated in the United States since the 1920s.... Corporate liberals instituted an ‘American Way of Life’ defined by a complementary combination of scientifically managed work with mass leisure and consumption” (3). Rallying after the war, the economy approached consumerism historically under the umbrella assumption that the future is now. Americans began to reject the Calvinism of the past Depression era, spending freely not so much out of genuine need as in the performative function of “Keeping up with the Jones’s.” This consumptive culture used the techniques of Henry Ford to produce the cookie-cutter houses of suburbia and expanded credit on a new mass scale so that major goods such as the automobile and the new television set could be widely available and, more importantly, purchased by everyone. Whereas Kerouac’s historical inversion locates utopia within hyper-individual experience, postwar consumerism places utopia on a mass scale, where everyone has the illusionary potential to buy (the same) happiness.

This too is a fleeting form of utopian experience and because of its nature consumption has the potential of being prolonged inevitably. One is always just one product away from an “age of perfection.” This is a feature of Bakhtin’s second utopian chronotope, eschatology, where “The immediate future is emptied out in a different way—not by the past, but by an absolute end” (Morson and Emerson 398). Eschatology omits history by undermining the felt lived experience from moment to moment, valuing instead an impending yet always unattainable utopia. Bakhtin notes, “Eschatology always sees the segment of a future separating the present from the end as lacking value; this separating segment of time loses its significance and interest, it is merely an unnecessary continuation of an indefinitely prolonged present” (*Dialogic* 148). Both

Kerouac's historical inversion and the postwar culture's eschatology of consumption mandate repetition and both place the importance of historical time in the present moment. For Kerouac the significance of this moment is consistently found within the re-articulation of the past utopian autobiographical moment; for the postwar social/economic culture, it is the predominance of consumption on a mass scale that lends itself to a utopian future.

Replication with revision is one of the defining features of performance and, also, one of the defining processes of Kerouac's prose as well as the culture in which he was operating. Displaced transmission articulates that performance practices are improvisatory behaviors that are reinvented by means of memory and imagination. In this postwar culture, there were many improvisatory actors from whom to choose these memories.

Confessing Other

"5. Something that you feel will find its own form" (Kerouac "Belief" 72).

According to his "Procedure" Kerouac writes, "Time being of the essence in the purity of speech, sketching language is undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret idea-words, *blowing* (as per jazz musician) on subject of image" and later "Blow as deep as you want.... *blow!—now!*" ("Essentials" 69-70). Kerouac further articulates the importance between his image object and the improvisational associations made by his method of sketching. Kerouac's echo of the jazz musician highlights one of his most important literary influences, and the culture of jazz performance offers much in terms of furthering our understanding of the postwar avant-garde's affinity for spontaneous performativity.

The originators of the jazz movement known as Bebop--including Charlie "Bird" Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Theolonius Monk, and Miles Davis--developed a sound of postwar America in direct contrast to the big band swing jazz of the 1930s and 1940s. Swing jazz, with its European orchestral model and its high-culture association, began to be seen as too stringent for the music's "sidemen" (members of the brass) and others who began developing new music on their own (Belgrad 180). A rallying point of these experiments was improvisation. Because of the swing era's large band requirements, improvisatory composition was not as much of an ideological focus.

Bebop countered the popularization of swing in the white mainstream, which many artists believed had become too saturated and imitative because of its commodified appeal. Bop highlighted the musician's autonomy through improvisation within the larger framework of jazz culture, contributing both technically and socially as a mark of black consciousness. Over the totality of a jazz performance, an improvisation is introduced on a melodic theme, written in chords, "and is usually played at the beginning and ending, the head and tail as they are known in jazz.... Between the head and the tail, the musician improvises on the tune's chord progression" (Malcolm 88). Improvisations were not based entirely on new inventions, which are the exceptions, but carefully discovered combinations of phrasing and quotation. Improvising, or blowing on the subject image as Kerouac calls it, actually refers to a complex intersubjective approach to artist and subject through the use of calculated combinations.

Though Kerouac fails to use music's technical terms to outline his writing style, he clearly uses bop's approach to music as a basis of his literary approach. In "Origins of the Beat Generation," Kerouac recalls a scene in the bop playhouse, the Three Deuces, when

he writes, “I was leaning against the bar with a beer when Dizzy came over for a glass of water from the bartender, put himself right against me and reached both arms around the both sides of my head to get the glass and danced away, as though knowing I’d be singing about him someday” (60). Kerouac’s recollection of this meditative transfer illustrates the postwar performance culture’s ability to surrogate between artistic genres.

Surrogation, or the symbolic transfer of one commodity for another, provides the link by which Kerouac’s use of bop musical form can be understood as performative within his use of spontaneous prose. Of surrogation, Roach states, “I believe that the process of trying out various candidates in different situations—the doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins—is the most important of the many meanings that users intend when they say the word *performance*” (*Cities* 3). Kerouac’s prose functions as a performance of bop (sometimes referred to as spontaneous bop prosody) as it both aspires to imitate *and* replace the musical genre in the form of literature.

Hunt writes of two factors that unify jazz performance, the first being melody and chord patterns as improvisational starting points, and the second being the vocabulary of the musician, or the recognizably individual way in which particular artists go about their phrasing to form repetitive patterns uniquely their own, signature sound. He states: “The role of melody or theme in jazz ... is roughly equivalent to the role of ‘image object’ in Spontaneous Prose.” Hunt continues: “In Kerouac’s Spontaneous Prose quirks of syntax, favored sounds, meters, and individual words ... that are used and reused in different contexts parallel the jazz musician’s vocabulary and make Kerouac’s performances as instantly recognizable” (*Crooked* 146). While it was Hunt who recognized the surrogative resonance of Kerouac’s melody and vocabulary with that of bop, Paton

further the argument by pointing out Kerouac's ability to function as an improviser between the beginning and end of his image object. Paton observes, "What needs to be emphasized ... is the way Kerouac returns to that image-object—or melody—once his improvisation has run its course" (127). An abbreviated short sketch from Kerouac's boyhood home from *Dr. Sax* illustrates:

I could hear it rise from the rocks in a groaning wush ululating with the water, sprawlsh, sprawlsh, oom, oom, zoooo, all night long the river says zooo, zooo, the stars are fixed in rooftops like ink. Merrimac, dark name, sported dark valleys: my Lowell had the great trees of antiquity in the rocky north waving over lost arrowheads and Indians scalps, the pebbles on the slatecliff beach are full of hidden beads and were stepped on barefoot by Indians. Merrimac comes swooping from a north of eternities, falls pissing over locks cracks and froths on rocks, bloth, and rolls frawing to the kale.... I had a terror of those waves, those rocks—. (8-9)

As in bop jazz composition, the crash of the waves from Kerouac's boyhood river serves as the image object, the head and tail of the melody on which he blows. In between is the vocabulary of the improvisation, a vocabulary that moves from the memory of the river, to the imagined history of its geography, to poeticized reflection and, finally, back to the original source of the composition. This and many other textual improvisations provide evidence of Kerouac's ability to surrogate the method of bop on the technical level.

According to Lowney, "bebop's hybrid style reflected the social heterogeneity of Harlem while registering the jarring but liberating impact of a new urban environment. Improvisation became a means for negotiating but also inventing new racial—and interracial—identities" (365). As a measure of performative surrogation, Kerouac's performance of spontaneous prose works not only on the technical level, but also as a means of racial social identity. Roach argues that surrogation operates in two modes, "In the first mode one actor stands in for another.... In the second mode of doubling, one

actor plays more than one role—two (or more) masks appear on one actor” (“Culture” 54). Kerouac would fall into the latter definition, negotiating the performative role of his whiteness in the tradition of racial surrogation.

After Kerouac’s novels grew in popularity and his stated affinity for jazz artists was well known, he was invited to perform his poetry and prose in front of audiences with live jazz accompaniment, in effect putting the musicians back into the swing era’s role of “sidemen.” Kerouac recorded three different jazz albums, available today in a CD box set from Rhino called *The Jack Kerouac Collection* (1990). Kerouac seemed to be aware of the genealogical role of blackface in his performance, writing in the 116th chorus of *Mexico City Blues*, “The Great Jazz Singer was Jolson the Vaudeville Singer?/No, and not Miles, me” (Kart 25). Such hubris articulates one of the main consequences of surrogation. Roach notes, “the contributions of other cultures to Western forms tend to become disembodied as ‘influences,’ distancing them from their original contexts.... This form of reversed ventriloquism permeates...performance, of which American popular culture is now the most ubiquitous and fungible nectar” (“Culture” 60). As black cultural mystique transferred to surrogate actors such as Kerouac and the Beats, blackface was further bound to be disseminated in the popular imagination.

The most notorious essay on this subject is Norman Mailer’s “*The White Negro*,” which was first published in *Dissent* magazine in 1957. In it Mailer writes of the hipster, or white Negro, the alienated white who looks to black culture for cultural authenticity. He writes that, “the source of Hip is the Negro for he has been living on the margin of totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries,” and later “And in this wedding of the

white and the black it was the Negro who brought the cultural dowry” (585-6). The initial credit that Mailer attributes to black culture concerning white appreciation soon shows its bastardization regarding the perceived surrogate “dowry.” Mailer lists as the positives of black culture its “psychopathy,” and “in the worst of perversion, promiscuity, pimping, drug addiction, raped, razor-slash, bottle-break, what-have-you, the Negro discovered and elaborated a morality of the bottom” (594). Such statements recall the primitivist myth of European romanticism, which introduced and elevated the idea of the “noble savage” in Western culture. By transferring such deep stereotypes to his mostly white postwar audience, Mailer furthers the historiographical myth of primitivism, showing the vandalism by which surrogation often flows cross-culturally.

Kerouac too was guilty of primitivism and the erasure of authenticity regarding black history, albeit in more romanticized language. In *On the Road* he writes of walking in Denver, “wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America,” and in an oft-quoted passage, “At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Welton on the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night” (179-80). But unlike the bop musicians of Harlem, who were arrested and had their cabaret cards revoked when white people began increasingly showing up at the jazz clubs, Kerouac could move easily in and out of “colored” identity. James Baldwin criticizes the *Road* passage, noting that “this is absolute nonsense ... objectively considered, and offensive nonsense at that ... And yet there is real pain in it, and real loss, however thin ... thin because it does not refer to reality but to a dream” (Malcolm 99). Despite its limitations

concerning the performance of authenticity from which it came, Kerouac's performativity of social identity does contribute in informing the racial shape shifting that Kerouac and others were improvising.

It is this place of surrogate performativity that Baldwin describes as a place of pain and loss, a place that Kerouac reveled in life and as a source of literary inspiration. Before "wishing [he] were a Negro," Kerouac introduces part three of *On the Road*, "In the spring of 1949 I had a few dollars saved from my GI education checks and I went to Denver, thinking of settling down there. I say myself in Middle America, a patriarch. I was lonesome. Nobody was there—" (179). The passage accentuates Kerouac's feelings towards the self-reflexive privilege of white performativity, stressing the impression by which white culture turns to surrogation for symbolic partnership. It also at least partially explains the continued readership of Kerouac, mostly disaffected white audiences, those who nervously search for a message or group they can identify with to buck their own historically informed racial identities.

Much of the resiliency of Kerouac's readership continues to be located by this surrogate empathy. In "Center of Interest" he writes, "Never afterthink to 'improve' or defray impressions, as, the best writing is always the most painful personal wrung-out tossed from cradle warm protective mind...*your* way is your only way – 'good' – or 'bad' – always honest...(ludicrous) spontaneous, 'confessional' interesting, because not 'crafted'. Craft *is* craft" ("Essentials" 70). Kerouac approaches writing as a moment of rapport between himself and his readers. Striving for "100% personal honesty," he saw his work as being composed of "true-story novels" and deeply personal conversations, wherein he attempts to let everything be known (Douglas 22, 21). Echoing the first

person confidant of Dostoevsky's *Notes From the Underground* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Kerouac begins *The Subterraneans*, "ONCE I WAS YOUNG and had so much more orientation and could talk with nervous intelligence about everything and with clarity and without as much literary preambing as this: in other words this is the story of an unself-confident man" (1). As a form of novelistic discourse, the confessional style favors the act of repetition and "literary preambing" because it resembles a conversation where ideas are put forth, returned to, and sometimes shared as experiences themselves. Kerouac was fully aware of this function of his prose and wanted to maintain it by rejecting a "preconceived idea" or an "afterthink." His assertion, "Craft is craft," is part of his theoretical approach to the honesty of his work. As a form of personal ethos between author and reader, "Spontaneous Prose is confessional by its very nature" (Hipkiss 91), and it develops rapport and trust between performer and audience. Jones observes that this "focus on sincerity" results in particular attention to the personality of the performer rather than on the competence of the performance (26). Both fans of Kerouac's writing and his critics focus on the autobiographical nature of his works rather than on the performative properties of his spontaneous approach, and he has become a popular icon as a result.

Kerouac could be just as fixated on postwar performance stars as his fans were on him. After the literary success of his *On the Road* novel, there were talks in the works with Kerouac and his agent concerning a possible film adaptation. He writes to his agent Sterling Lord, "I can see it now, Marlon Brando as Dean Moriarty and Montgomery Clift as Sal Paradise in ON THE ROAD" (*Selected Letters 1940* 530). Brando and Clift were already popular film icons, Brando starring in such vehicles as *A Streetcar Named Desire*

and Clift featured in films such as *A Place in the Sun*. What tied the two actors together was their artistic training in the “Method” of the Actor’s Studio, headed by Lee Strasberg in New York City, and vastly popularized in and by both film and theatre performances.

John Clellon Holmes, author of *Go* and “This is the Beat Generation,” writes of such stars and their performances that Method acting was “Preeminently the acting style of the Beat Generation” (Sterritt *Mad* 80). Strasberg, a student of Stanislavsky’s teaching methods, intended to subvert the mimetic mode of acting style, which was popular at the time. According to Adams, “The going technique was not naturalness but imitativeness. Not reality but theatricality. The Delsarte system taught acting by precise directives for precise situations such as where to position the hands, feet, face for each theatrical response” (2). Styles such as the Delsarte system favored the mechanical approach to acting where actors were trained based on set patterns of manners and voice articulation. For Strasberg and the Studio, this type of acting “not only appeared artificial ... it also produced artificial meanings. It molded the actors ‘truth’ into conventional forms, rendering it ‘inauthentic,’ no longer the genuine expression of his or her intentions” (Counsell 54). Strasberg swung the pendulum of performance back to the natural school, where performers were not judged on precise diction or cleanliness of stage movement but by the perceived difficulty found in expressing the thoughts and feeling of the characters they portrayed.

Part of this training came from a confessional style of acting where the actor used his or her own experiences as a surrogate performance of the character. A classic example from the Method is the use of affective memory, where actors were trained to use their own recall to invoke emotions for their characters. Done successfully, recalling such

emotions allowed the actor to draw from her/his emotional “paint box” at any needed moment. The “affect” of such an exercise marked a performance style that highlighted extreme emotional qualities and the particularity of the individual actor (Counsell 57-8). Coupled with the commercialization of youth culture during the fifties, these actors’ Method-based performances helped fuel the iconic representation of the anti-hero in America.

Kerouac took note and went even beyond fantasizing about the Method actor as his surrogate self. In the early 1960s, as his repetitive self in life and on the page began to wane, he briefly considered an acting career, even visiting the Actor’s Studio and meeting Lee Strasberg in the hope of enrolling (Nicosia 619). His acting career never came to be, and Hollywood has failed, as of now, to make a faithful adaptation of a Kerouac confessional novel. Kerouac and the Beats may not have been adequately portrayed by film to this day, but their legacy of transferring literacy to performance remains.

Improvising Out Loud

“2. Submissive to everything, open listening” (Kerouac “Belief” 72).

The motif of musical composition continues on into Kerouac’s “Method” section of “Essentials” where he writes:

No periods separating sentence-structures already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid usually needless commas – but the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing (as jazz musician drawing breath between outblown phrases) – ‘measured pauses which are the essentials of our speech’ – ‘divisions of the *sounds* we hear’ – ‘time and how to note it down.’ (69)

One of the signatures of Kerouac's language is breaking grammatical rules; paragraphs can stretch on for two pages and signify the exhalation of separate sketches. Kerouac's choice of syntax to depict the movement of his improvisations is the space dash, which he credits in a *Paris Review* interview to music:

Interviewer: What about jazz and bop as influences...? Kerouac: Yes, jazz and bop in the sense of a, say, tenor man drawing a breath and blowing a phrase on his saxophone, till he runs out of breath, and when he does, his sentence, his statement's been made ... that's how I therefore separate my sentences, as breath separations of the mind.... (Hunt *Crooked* 145)

As a governing force of his prose, music and its role in writing further articulates the role performance plays in Kerouac's "Essentials." In *Visions of Cody*, he writes of jazz musicians that "they seemed to come on in their horns with a will, saying things, a lot to say, talkative horns ... made you hear the way to fill up blank spaces of time with the tune and consequence of your hands and breath and soul" (351). This transference from the ear to the breath as a result of jazz performance marks a defining feature of literature's power to perform.

In her essay, "Performing Writing," Della Pollock states, "Performative writing is *evocative*. It operates metaphorically to render absence present—to bring the reader into contact with 'other-worlds,' to those aspects and dimensions of our world that are other to the text as such by re-marking them" (80). One way in which this is accomplished is by meshing a variety of oral and literate forms. Kerouac's appropriation of bop helped him pursue his goal concerning the reclamation of oral language within print. This is what Roach defines as *orature*, the combined effect of cultural forms that problematizes the often times dichotomized version of orality and literacy. Roach articulates of orature

that it “does not accept a schematized opposition between literacy and orality as transcendent categories ... it rests upon the conviction that these modes of communication have produced one another interactively over time, and that their historic operations may be usefully examined under the rubric of performance” (“Culture” 45-6). Orature urges participation, and like a jazz soloist improvising from the melody provided by the band, Kerouac spoke in the voice of music to highlight this genealogical function, a technique passed down to him from others like Walt Whitman and William Carlos Williams of the Imagists school.

Kerouac’s approach pushed him towards prosody, “the contents of a vocal utterance other than what is symbolized by the words; it includes syntax, and musical elements such as rhythm, pitch, and timbre” (Belgrad 154). Kerouac’s prosody allowed him to develop his own autographic sound, accentuating and moving his prose along at times, others in which it becomes the subject itself. A passage from his *The Subterraneans* illustrates:

Visions of great words in rhythmic order all in one giant archangel book go roaring thru my brain, so I lie in the dark also seeing also hearing the jargon of the future worlds—damajehe eleout ekeke dhdkdk dldoud, ----d, ekeoue dhhdkehgyt.... poor examples because of mechanical needs of typing, of the flow of river sounds, words, dark, leading to the future (42)

Kerouac’s remark here concerning “future worlds” and “leading to the future” is significant, as it marks his belief in the inventive prowess of performative orature, the main model from which he found in jazz. Kerouac’s response to jazz and its literary possibilities focused him more and more on the technique and subject of orality in his writing as a method of postliteracy, “the possibility of asserting the values of an oral culture within a culture already conditioned by writing” (Belgrad 193). This is one of the

reasons why he continued to reshape the subject material of his best-selling *On the Road*, which would later regenerate itself as the much more experimental *Visions of Cody*.

Hunt writes of the latter novel that it “is an attempt (actually a series of attempts) to use writing against itself and *enact* the oral.... the ‘novel’ probes and plays out the dialectic between performance (the book’s improvised takes) and construction (the retrospective and more writerly weaving of these pieces into a structure and fixed whole)” (*Preface* xxiv). Sound and Kerouac’s articulation of it become not just a prescribed way in which to read his work; it also becomes a call to listen to further understand its structure.

As Kerouac and the Beats continued to focus on sound, they inevitably turned more toward oral performance as a means of exploring spontaneity. These performances, usually accompanied by jazz composition, often became the subject itself. Belgrad notes that, in performance, “the poem could be altered or even composed on the spur of the moment; but once spoken, the word could not be erased or revised. In this sense, performance was more than an ancillary practice of the Beats. It was a model for their poetry” (219). Literacy often hides the compositional process, creating the illusion of fixed meaning. Performance allowed a true quality of writerly composition its own stage in face-to-face exchanges. Its quality accentuated the physical relation between performer and audience and the sound of the writing itself. In one of the first published essays on Kerouac’s work, it was precisely this aspect that the critic recognized. In “Kerouac’s Sound,” Warren Tallman puts it succinctly: “The truth is in the improvisations” (165). Orature provided Kerouac such a truth, and its range of forms and its felt live performance, whether in print or in poetry slams today, remains one of the lasting contributions made by the Beats and postwar performance culture.

Paging the Body

“11. Visionary tics shivering in the chest” (Kerouac “Belief” 72).

Part of the role prosody plays in Kerouac’s prose is the push towards sound found in music; the other is the articulation of physicality and its effect between writer and reader. It is this cause and effect argument that he writes of in his “Scoping” section in “Essentials”:

Not ‘selectivity’ of expression but following free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on-subject seas of thought, swimming in sea of English with no discipline other than rhythms of rhetorical exhalation and expos-tulated statement, like a fist coming down on a table with each complete utterance, bang! (the spacedash)... write as deeply, fish as far down as you want, satisfy yourself first, then reader cannot fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning-excitement by same laws operating in his own human mind. (69)

Kerouac’s chimerical fist to the table recalls Roach’s idea of the kinesthetic imagination. It is within this perspective that Roach situates the body as a source of memory, a source that is played out in physical expression either in everyday life or in its (cited) memory, which is found in literature (*Cities* 27). Kerouac used his body to perform his prose, but he more regularly used the body as a site of performativity to sketch his subjects and articulate their condition as living beings within postwar America. This is a defining feature of the kinesthetic imagination that Roach articulates: “The kinesthetic imagination ... inhabits the realm of the virtual. Its truth is the truth of simulation, of fantasy, or of daydreams, but its effect on human action may have material consequences of the most tangible sort and of the widest scope” (*Cities* 27). Kerouac provides a vivid example of this function in a sketch about his hero subject and the Three Stooges in *Visions of Cody*. The sketch is about a walk to work with Cody, but its imagination goes far beyond the

monotony usually equivalent to the performance of this everyday life activity. The fantasized interaction results in a host of associative qualities; from *Visions of Cody* Kerouac writes:

We sauntered thus.... when it came into Cody's head to imitate the stagger of the Stooges, and he did it wild, crazy, yelling in the sidewalk right there by the arches and by hurrying executives, I had a vision of him which at first (manifold it is!) was swamped by the idea that this was one hell of a wild unexpected twist in my suppositions about how he might now in his later years feel, twenty-five, about his employers and their temple and conventions.... So Supposing the Three Stooges were real and like Cody and me were going to work.... Then I saw the Three Stooges materialize on the sidewalk, their hair blowing in the wind of things, and Cody was with them, laughing and staggering in savage mimicry of them ... they are finally bopping mechanically and sometimes so hard it's impossible to bear (wince), but by now they've learned not only how to master the style of the blows but the symbol and acceptance of them also.... (303-5)

Kerouac conjures the physicality of Cody and the Stooges as a kinesthetic response to the inherent child living within the adult world. Cody's body and those of the Stooges provide models of play as a spiritual and emotional alternative to the rigidity of the body as a site of capitalism and control.

The kinesthetic imagination was not only a means by which Kerouac invoked his subjects; it also became a mode of criticism against his compositional style, such as in Capote's quip that Kerouac's writing was mere typing. Capote's put-down echoes the historically transmitted idea of the mind as somehow being separate from the body. Kerouac did type rapidly, producing a version of *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans* in all night marathon sessions, but because critics like Capote equalize this to pure gesture, they fail to recognize that the mind is very much tied to the physical process of writing. Kerouac explains his compositional procedure of storytelling, "you think out what actually happened, you tell friends long stories about it, you mull it over in your mind ...

then when the time comes to pay the rent again you force yourself to sit at the typewriter, or at the writing notebook, and get it over with as fast as you can ... and there's no harm in that because you've got the whole story lined up" (Theado 33). Kerouac rejected the dichotomy between the body and the mind, creating in its place a breath and gesture of prosody from which his audience could receive a "telepathic shock" and "meaning excitement" as real as their own. The effect is what Ann Douglas describes as a "culture of intimacy," and of it she writes, "Kerouac makes the reader his confidant, taking her into his most private thoughts and experiences, into areas which the world sometimes seems to prohibit us from sharing with anyone—our feelings about our bodies, our self-imagings, the moods that inspire and afflict our need to believe" (22). Far from being too fast then, Kerouac's prose actually inspires his readers to slow down and examine the places of memory and the imagination that are often times taught to be ignored or hidden away from view.

Artistic gesture might seem clandestine, but the postwar avant-garde did much to enhance the American cultural imagination of it. The best documentation of this endeavor comes from the Abstract Expressionists, specifically the Action Painters that included William de Kooning, Franz Kline, and Jackson Pollock. Action Painting was first coined by critic Harold Rosenberg in his seminal essay, "The American Action Painters," which first appeared in *ARTnews* in December 1952. Rosenberg turned his attention to the gesture of the Abstract Expressionists to distinguish it from formalist criticism that attributed the postwar painters' style to cubism and surrealism. What separated the Action Painters from their European predecessors, according to Rosenberg, was the performative nature of their approach. He conjures the kinesthetic imagination

when he states, “At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act--rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze, or ‘express’ an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event” (76). According to this view, art would not be separated from the physiological presence of the painter. To view the painting’s performance, the audience must pay attention to the artist’s gesture as it is made manifest in the painted line and brushstroke. The performative turn of the painter to that of actor contributed to rising fame with the Abstract Expressionists, especially the Action Painters, and Jackson Pollock in particular continues to be the biggest benefactor.

William de Kooning once said, “Pollock broke the ice,” crediting Jackson Pollock as the first to separate himself through artistic invention of an original style that distinguished his art from the rest of the world. By the time he moved with his wife Lee Krasner in 1945 to Long Island, Pollock was coming into his own as a painter, culminating into the period from 1947-50 when he produced his classic drip paintings. One of the greatest innovations by which this was accomplished was by placing his canvases on the floor, allowing him to move physically throughout the painting. By dripping paint straight from the can or with sticks and towels Pollock created highly disciplined webs of color and movement into perceived products of chaos. Several years earlier the artist and teacher Hans Hofmann once advised the younger Pollock that although he clearly worked from the heart, he might do better working from nature. To this Pollock shot back, “I am nature” (Wheeler 42). Pollock did not separate himself from nature, and he recognized the importance his body played in the performative perception of his paintings.

In a short essay entitled “My Painting,” Pollock communicates the kinesthetic effect he is able to accomplish by working within the canvas. He states, “I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be *in* the painting” (356). The technique allowed Pollock to freely experiment from his body, granting him a spontaneity that produced a smooth easiness while in communion with the painting. Pollock shares the process by writing:

When I am *in* my painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. It is only after a sort of ‘get acquainted’ period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony, an easy give and take and the painting comes out well. (357)

Pollock’s rapport between his body and his painting led to his success and it was the basis of his depiction in much of the popular culture’s kinesthetic imagination. “Jack the Dripper,” as he was called, became the archetypal postwar artist, featured in film and in *Life* magazine. In fact the *image* of Pollock, much like the biography of Kerouac, would subsume him, and he in turn would meet the same alcoholic fate of Kerouac as a result.

Kerouac was well aware of the technical contributions made by the Action Painters concerning gestural language. In an essay entitled “Are Writers Made or Born?” Kerouac distinguishes artists with genius, originators of prose technique and subject, and those with talent, but whose virtuosity is limited to interpretation. He calls on Jackson Pollock to make his point: “There can be no major writer without original genius. Artists of genius, like Jackson Pollock, have painted things that have never been seen before. Anybody who’s seen his immense Samapattis of color has no right to criticize his ‘crazy method’ of splashing and throwing and dancing around” (77). Kerouac recognized the

strength by which Pollock's "dancing" contributed to the force of his painting, and Kerouac's critic points to the role its performance plays in relating to the kinesthetic imagination. Hunt notes the congruence between Pollock and Kerouac, citing a specific novel as an example: "If a Pollock canvas is the record of a dance in color, *Visions of Cody* is the record of a dance in language" (*Crooked* 144). The play of memory and the body dictates that the audience must imagine the steps made by Pollock, just as they must imagine the choice in movement made in the performativity of Kerouac's prose.

The ability of memory to move from the page to the body is a point Kerouac makes abundantly clear as he concludes his treatise on spontaneous prose. He writes of the proper "Mental State": "If possible write ... swiftly, with writing-or-typing-cramps, in accordance (as from center to periphery) with laws of orgasm, Reich's 'beclouding of consciousness.' *Come* from within, out – to relaxed and said" ("Essentials" 71). Kerouac's move here is to call upon the kinesthetic imagination to simulate the site of spontaneous recollection: from the mind, to the lower bodily stratum's function of orgasm through sexual intercourse. Like the Surrealists' use of the daydream, Kerouac provides his own faculty of memory evoked through spontaneity by calling on the Austrian psychologist Wilhelm Reich and his discourse on the body as a site of kinesthetic imagination. Reich, the controversial psychologist, argued against the Freudian claim that the repression of human sexuality was a necessary step in the development of human culture. Such repression, Reich suggested, led to patriarchal authoritarian societies, where "Body armor" was learned as a psychological defense, and, thus, produced bodies that functioned through tension and rigidity (Belgrad 149). In contrast to Freud, Reich wrote works like *Function of the Orgasm*, stipulating that the

body could unlearn such coded behaviors by naturalizing sexual behaviors through spontaneous fulfillment in an attempt to cure neurosis. Later in the United States Reich became imprisoned where he died under FDA law after his orgone accumulators were banned and the government burned some of his papers, making him an instant hero to the bohemian underground. Kerouac was one of Reich's fans, and he used Reich's ideas as a model for *The Subterraneans*. At the time of its composition, Kerouac told friends that writing the book "was a form sexual activity for him" (Jones 125). Kerouac's spontaneity moves the unconscious ecstasy of the orgasm into the conscious work of the writer. As an approach to the image object, Kerouac's prose first approaches the center of interest, builds up via organic association, and, finally, releases once the discourse has run its course. Unlike the brief time involved for the bodily function of orgasm to achieve "relaxed and said," Kerouac is able to extend the time applicable while writing in the virtual, kinesthetically imagined work of the writer. Also, unlike the real function of orgasm, writing in this virtual capacity allows him to achieve climax over and over, as the role of repetition allowed him to return to the subjects of his spontaneous process.

Conclusion

In a 1955 statement to his editor, Malcolm Cowley, Kerouac explains his writing style of spontaneous prose as being against the paradox: "what a man has hidden, i.e., his craft, instead of what we need, what a man has shown." As a result of spontaneity he writes, "I foresee a new literature on account of this—but it's hard, it's paradoxical, i.e., it's taken me all my life to learn to write what I actually think—*by not thinking*" (*Selected Letters 1940* 516). Kerouac did not spend a great deal of time thinking like a literary theorist, and the paradox of his "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose" is that it contains the

wealth of information it does in so little amount of space, as the text itself is only approximately two pages in length. Still, this praxis outline performs like a suitcase where the reader is able to unpack multiple associative qualities of Kerouac's lines of thought, including the boundary crossing functions of his discourse. An approach to this cultural text by means of a historical genealogical approach is particularly helpful in this unpacking function because it gives the performance scholar multiple tools by which he or she can record and imagine the historical transmission of performance practices.

In his own words, Kerouac provides the "Essentials" of the felicity conditions by which he approaches performative writing. Central to Kerouac's method of spontaneous performativity is his approach to sketching where he traces his subjects via free association in a meditation with his definitive image objects. Another fundamental concept relating to Kerouac's spontaneity is his approach to timing. Kerouac most consistently approaches timing in his novels in the historical present at the moment of writing, the effect being a prose that consistently relies on vertical associative qualities and the confessional mode of personal narrative. By displacing and transforming the imaginative techniques of a multitude of artistic genres into his own literary work, Kerouac becomes a symbolic substitute and an echo of these artists acting, in part, as their historical double in the postwar avant-garde.

Within his "Essentials" text, Kerouac provides a model for the *doing* of performative writing, the specificity of which contributes to our understanding of performing writing as a discursive and historiographical practice. By approaching this pedagogy from a genealogical perspective, "Essentials" offers itself as an alternative to strict textual meditation. This supplement highlights the performance of culture, where one authorial

voice is linked as an echo of others that helped in establishing its purveyance. This voicing of the past allows interdisciplinary scholars a way to approach history not just through literary texts, but also by its performances. The literary imagination is not just comprised of words, but by actions, the voice and body included. Della Pollock states that “Performative writing is *citational*.... citational writing quotes a world that is always already performative—that is composed in and as repetition and reiteration” (92).

Performance genealogies provide a resource through which scholars can contribute to understanding the citational function of performance and history, in general, and the citational function of performative writing that confronts that history, specifically. By approaching Kerouac’s “Essentials” as a discursive genealogical mask, a wide array of other faces appear in art, music, acting, and others; faces of the past and of his present avant-garde moment, an emergence of Jack Kerouac’s spontaneous prose. This chapter has been largely focused on a deductive approach to understanding Kerouac’s felicity conditions of performative writing. The following chapters begin a discussion of the actual performances themselves, beginning with his only truly canonical text, *On the Road*.

Chapter Three: The Winding *Road* of Spontaneity

As American writing performances are made manifest in the popular imagination Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* is at once one of the most easily recognizable and just as easily misunderstood. The most famous version of its compositional process recalls the three weeks beginning in April 1951 when Kerouac taped together sheets of paper and wrote non-stop under the influence of Benzedrine inhalers, producing a manuscript that eventually turned into a 120 yard scroll, composed of 186,000 words without paragraphs or periods (Watson 136). Critics and fans alike have held up this scroll as *the* spontaneous version of the novel that relates the adventures of Kerouac's autobiographical narrator, Sal Paradise, and the book's hero, Dean Moriarty, who is based on Kerouac's friend, Neal Cassady. In May of 2001 it was this version that sold for 2.43 million dollars, making it the most expensive literary manuscript to date. Although certainly a technical breakthrough on his quest towards spontaneous prose, the scroll version, which was written on a yellow teletype roll, is in fact one of many competing versions that Kerouac wrote in shaping the material that would eventually appear in *On the Road*. At least five revisions were made in total, including the thematically revised and separately published *Pic* and *Visions of Cody* (Hunt xvii). In the strict sense of spontaneous prose, at least as he outlines in his "Essentials" text, such breadth and depth of the revision process make *On the Road* not his best example of spontaneity, but actually one of the least consummate. Kerouac's *On the Road* is not his best performance of spontaneous prose, at least in comparison to works like *Visions of Cody* and *Dr. Sax*. However, the book does represent an important step in understanding the breakthroughs that Kerouac would later achieve as an artist, an emergence of

spontaneity not to be as obviously found in form as in subject. This chapter explores the obstacles that Kerouac faced on his quest towards spontaneous prose while also accounting for the novel's continued popularity. By approaching *On the Road* as a genealogical artifact in the larger corpus of Kerouac's writing, I argue here that Kerouac's novel is a novel of liminality or transition. That is, it is a novel that is betwixt and between his first, more conventional and imitative novel and the later work he achieves as a practitioner of spontaneous prose. Furthermore, because Kerouac's *On The Road* functions as an artifact of liminality, it endures as a modernistic narrative of cultural identity. The author addresses the human condition itself in its transformative state, and this chapter critiques his model of spontaneity by means of its approach to time and space, as well as its negotiation of cultural identity during the postwar years.

Originally developed in the field of anthropology, Victor Turner's early work on the theory of liminality describes the ritualized stages through which individuals must pass in order to become fully integrated members of their societies. In the phase he describes as liminality, ritual subjects are typically stripped of their former status, rank, and identity (e.g., as child) and exist for a time in between their former status and the new one they acquire when they are reintegrated into society. Turner argues "The attributes of liminality or of liminal 'personae' ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (*Ritual* 95). Later in his career and in collaboration with performance theorist Richard Schechner, Turner broadened liminality to include descriptions of ritual as cultural performances. He states, "the whole *ritual process* constitutes a threshold between secular living and sacred living.... The

dominant genres of performance in societies at all levels of scale and complexity tend to be *liminal phenomena*” (*Anthropology* 25). Two other aspects of Turner and Schechner’s definition of liminality inform this study, spontaneous *communitas* and the distinction between the liminoid and liminal.

Turner outlines two models of human interrelatedness, “The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of political-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation” (*Ritual* 96). This “structured” society is marked in contrast to Turner’s second model of human relatedness, what he calls spontaneous *communitas*, which is made manifest during the liminal period. Schechner describes spontaneous *communitas* as “a dreamed-up-of-utopian ‘state’ in both senses of the word” (*Future* 88). In spontaneous *communitas* members of the liminal group are seen as equals, time is sacred, in the now, although this state is ephemeral and cannot be maintained for long. Turner notes, “It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or ‘holy,’ possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency” (*Ritual* 128). In literary communities Turner specifically cites the Beats as an example. He writes, “In modern Western society, the values of *communitas* are strikingly present in the literature and behavior of what came to be known as the ‘beat generation’” (*Ritual* 112). In later work, Turner would differentiate the theory of liminality with that of the liminoid.

The main difference between these two states is a function of choice. According to Turner, the liminoid is the “successor of the liminal in complex large-scale societies, where individuality and optation in art have in theory supplanted collective and

obligatory ritual performances” (*Anthropology* 29). The liminoid is a surrogate for the liminal, as it strives to adhere, albeit without the obligation, to the customs and practices of liminal persons. Turner writes of the arts specifically in addressing the artistic surrogation of the liminal, stating that “The solitary artist *creates* the liminoid phenomena, the collectivity *experiences* collective liminal symbols” (*Theatre* 52). This chapter topically explores the liminal symbols of *On the Road* and the collective experience of its performance. To provide this collective function, Kerouac’s novel is read as a genealogy of two literary genre antecedents. In section one Kerouac’s approach to time and space is discussed in light of its genealogical reliance on the literary tradition of the picaresque narrative. In section two, Kerouac’s novel is discussed as an updated version of the American romance tradition, one that addresses the topical areas of the West and cultural haunting. In providing this genealogical function of the novel, my hope is to provide a reading of *On the Road* that goes beyond the fetishization of Kerouac’s scroll-writing performance that usually accompanies the outside spectacle of writing the scroll. Instead, this chapter argues that we should become audience to the myriad complexities of the writing performance going on inside the novel itself.

Beating Time and Space

On the Road is the story of not one but several journeys across America and into Mexico during the time period between 1946 and 1950. The book opens as Kerouac explains his impetus for his travels and what he seeks to leave behind and gain by accessing the friendship of Dean Moriarty. He begins Part One, “I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won’t bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split-up

and my feeling that everything was dead”; a few pages later, he adds, “Yes, and it wasn’t only because I was a writer and needed new experiences that I wanted to know Dean more, and because my life hanging around the campus had reached the completion of its cycle ... but because somehow ... he reminded me of some long lost brother” (*Road* 1, 7). During the initial drafts of *On the Road* Kerouac’s life, like his writing, was at a turning point when he first met Neal Cassady. Cassady’s impulsive, spontaneous character would change not only Kerouac’s approach to prose but also, in *On the Road*, his journey through life itself. With the coming of Dean and the road, Kerouac concludes Part One with the hope that, “Somewhere along the line I knew there’d be girls, visions, everything; somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me” (*Road* 8). The rest of the novel takes up this quest for spiritual authenticity; the search for the “pearl” is performed most readily as a hunt for the holiness of the personal moment shared spontaneously between two friends.

As a subject, Kerouac may never have been more successful in his discussion of the “now” of timing than he was in *On the Road*’s quest for “IT.” Sal and Dean’s journeys revolve around the elusive meaning of this term, a liminal metaphor where time stops and only spontaneous understanding remains. Kerouac introduces the term as Dean tries to explain to Sal the importance of Rollo Greb, who “could hardly get a word out, he was so excited with life.” Dean confides to Sal, “‘That Rollo Greb is the greatest, most wonderful of all. That’s what I was trying to tell you—that’s what I want to be. I want to be like him. He’s never hung-up, he goes every direction, he lets it all out, he knows time.... You see, if you go like him all the time you’ll finally get it.’ ‘Get what?’ ‘IT! IT! I’ll tell you—now not time, we have no time now!’” (*Road* 127). By stripping

chronological time of its importance, Dean shows Sal that the experience that they are currently in is IT, “no time now” representing the defeat of time in its usual sense and in its place the flash of spontaneous ecstasy.

Turner specifically addresses this function of time in differentiating his two forms of society, stating that “Communitas is of the now; structure is rooted in the past and extends into the future through language, law, and custom” (*Ritual* 113). By searching and sometimes achieving IT together, Sal and Dean represent a model of communitas and a literary sign for the liminal rites of adolescents subverting their society’s promulgation of normalized time structures. Turner notes that “We are presented, in such rites, with a ‘moment in and out of time,’ and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties” (*Ritual* 96). “IT” is the symbol of this transcendent status of time, the ephemeral chance of utopian pleasure through knowledge. Turner writes of the universality of this experience, questioning his audience, “Is there any of us who has not known this moment when compatible people—friends, congeners—obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding ... when they feel that all problems, not just their problems, could be resolved ... if only the group which is felt (in the first person) as ‘essentially us’ could sustain its intersubjective illumination” (*Theatre* 48). This is both the glory and the problem of IT because it is a moment and not a fixed position. IT is a performance of time and place completely marked off from normal time that, like all performance, is fleeting and ephemeral. Turner notes that “Spontaneous communitas is a phase, a moment, not a permanent condition” (*Ritual* 140). *On the Road* documents the

joy and frustration of the quest for this moment, a series of victories and defeats wrought by the challenge of conquering IT. As Giamo succinctly put it in summarizing the novel, “for every IT one takes a HIT, and so on” (20).

As a basis of noting Kerouac’s approach to time and space in the novel, the chronotope of historical inversion, which works as it is applied to Kerouac’s approach to spontaneous prose, provides only a partial understanding of *On the Road*. This is because Kerouac’s characters only achieve these moments haphazardly, the theme being a quest rather than an achievement, and the novel itself was written with only a partial understanding of the method that Kerouac would later have a better technical grasp of. In the place of historical inversion Bakhtin provides a much more suitable label in describing novels like *On the Road* that base their direction on the spatio-temporal movement of travel.

Within his discussion of the chronotope Bakhtin distinguishes between novels that provide a genuine sense of “becoming” and those that do not. Morson and Emerson argue that in novels of the first type:

(1) Individuals must genuinely grow: their identity must develop and they must be capable of developing it.... (2) The same is true of history: present, past, and future must be linked by a process of genuine growth, which means that change does not take place in an arbitrary fashion.... (3) The two processes—individual and historical becoming—are neither versions of each other nor wholly independent. (405)

Bakhtin goes on to discuss “novels without emergence,” a set of categories that define fiction that lacks a genuine sense of becoming. Of interest here is Bakhtin’s first class that he describes as the “travel novel,” and he lists as examples classical authors such as Petronius and Apeuleius, European picaresque novels like *Gil Blas*, and finally the

adventure-picaresque novels of Defoe and Smollett (*Speech Genres* 10). In these types of novels the hero lacks any real development and temporal categories are weak.

According to Bakhtin, “The hero is a point moving in space. He has no essential distinguishing characteristics” (*Speech Genres* 10). In the travel novel, characters of importance occupy the liminal space in between socially marked positions and as a result, chance occurrence marks the dramatic situations they come across, and adventure time dictates the plot development. Bakhtin notes, “The adventure plot ... is precisely clothing draped over the hero, clothing which he can change as often as he pleases. The adventure plot relies not on what the hero is, not on the place he occupies in life, but more often on what he is not, on what ... is unexpected and not predetermined” (*Problems* 104). In the travel novel the heroes strive to attach themselves to a life plot, a quest they are ultimately denied to move the adventure along.

Lacking historical time, the adventure plot of the novel relies on simplistic character development and a look towards the marginalized. Bakhtin argues, “Hence these novels typically perceive alien social groups, nations, countries, ways of life, and so forth, as ‘exotic’” (*Speech Genres* 11). There is no real becoming of the hero as a result and Bakhtin challenges that the temporal categories are just as frail. He writes, “In this type of novel, time in and of itself lacks any significance or historical coloring.... The only time developed in this type of novel is adventure time, which consists of the most immediate units—moments, hours, days—snatched at random from the temporal process” (*Speech Genres* 11). Genealogically, Kerouac’s *On the Road* follows much of this same tradition and the quest for IT dictates the process of the story’s adventure-picaresque chronotope.

In the novel, the character of Sal Paradise represents the more liminoid figure, as he strives to attach himself to a life he has yet to define. He wants normalcy on the one hand, stating “I want to marry a girl ... so I can rest my soul with her till we both get old. This can’t go on all the time—all this frantiness and jumping around. We’ve got to go someplace, find something” (*Road* 117). He never is able to fulfill this choice however and the novel’s chronotope dictates that he must move on and consistently cast his lot following the figures of spontaneity. In one of the most quoted passages of the novel he states:

They rushed down the street together.... and I shambled after as I’ve been doing all my after people who interest me, because the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn of say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars....(*Road* 6-7).

Paradise is the follower in the novel, Moriarty its leader. Dean occupies a more fixed place in the liminoid world than does Sal, his life plot dictated by the choice of abandoning structural ties in favor of the endless search for IT. This quest is where he ultimately resides in the novel, an un-resting place that Kerouac writes of in the exit scene between Sal and Dean in New York. Sal states, “Dean ragged in a motheaten overcoat he brought specially for the freezing temperatures of the East, walked off alone, and the last I saw of him he rounded the corner of Seventh Avenue, eyes on the street ahead, and bent to it again” (*Road* 306-7). Even at the end the characters are denied the happy ending they strive to achieve, the novel’s chronotope working to establish that the cyclical story, like their travels, bears reiteration. The road provides the spatial stage for the novel’s chronotope; its approach to time provides its stage directions.

Spatially Driven

According to Bakhtin, as a “point moving in space” the spatial categories described in the picaresque novel are essentially broad and are formulated according to disparity. He notes of the genre that it “enables the artist to develop and demonstrate the spatial and static social diversity of the world.... The world is a spatial contiguity of differences and contrasts, and life is an alternation of various contrasting conditions: success/failure, happiness/unhappiness, victory/defeat, and so on” (*Speech Genres* 10-11). Spatially, Dean and Sal move across the country at a break-neck pace in their chase for IT at the expense of remaining somewhere. According to Mortenson this “rejection of fixed place is emblematic of Beat attempts to escape a spatial control that becomes intertwined with temporal constraint” (62). The subversion of fixed place and the joy associated with the escape of its time restraints can be seen early on in the novel as Dean and Sal head to New Orleans. Kerouac writes, “We were all delighted, we all realized we were leaving confusion and nonsense behind and performing our one and noble function of the time, *move*” (*Road* 134). The performance of travel achieves this goal, while also acquiring for the performers the natural consequence of its perpetuation, never becoming full-fledged members of a group or community. Kerouac shares the two-fold function of this process in a song from the novel, “Home in Missoula, Home in Truckee, Home in Opelousas, Ain’t no home for me. Home in old Medora, Home in Wounded Knee, Home in Ogallala, Home I’ll never be.... The endless poem” (*Road* 255). Sal is clearly aware of this consequence but never seeks to change it substantively, instead choosing to replicate the process of arrival and departure throughout the novel. Giamo argues, “This sense of consciousness in time, which subverts the ecstatic liberation of IT, is further

heightened by virtue of repetition” (38). There are clear signs of the wane of this repetition process on Sal. In between the places of the “strange Gray Myth of the West and the weird dark Myth of the East” he admits, “I realized I was beginning to cross and recross towns in America as though I were a traveling salesman—raggedy travelings, bad stock, rotten beans in the bottom of my bag of tricks, nobody buying” (*Road* 245; 247). The novel’s picaresque chronotope provides the spatial contrast that Kerouac utilized to highlight his characters’ alternating feelings of victory and defeat in their quest of IT by means of repetitive travel. The road, in turn, allows the symbol by which the novel itself can be understood as a reflection on liminal experience.

In their work, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, Victor and Edith Turner write specifically how pilgrimages, as a form of travel, can be seen as liminoid phenomena. They share “movement in general (as against stasis) symbolizing the uncapturability and temporal transience of *communitas*; individuality posed against the institutionalized milieu ... pilgrimage is liminoid” (254). Kerouac’s picaresque chronotope functions as a type of pilgrimage, providing the major means by which Sal and Dean try to achieve their own *communitas*, a social identity marked off from the one associated with domesticity. Announcing the road as pilgrimage motif, Sal states, “As we crossed the Colorado-Utah border I saw God in the sky in the form of huge gold sunburning clouds above the desert that seemed to point a finger at me and say, ‘Pass here and go on, you’re on the road to heaven’” (*Road* 181). Movement achieves “Heaven” for Sal and Dean, and Kerouac draws again on Biblical references to allude to their pilgrimage of spiritual discovery. After dropping off a character named “Solomon” in “Testament,” Sal says that he and Dean “suddenly saw the whole country like an

oyster for us to open; and the pearl was there, the pearl was there” (*Road* 138). Like the tribal member who is cast out to perform liminal identity rites, Sal and Dean cast themselves out from the social structure. This is a form of liberation for the liminoid twosome, a space where they can perform the chance-based performances of their *communitas*.

As a symbol of spontaneous representation, the road was very much on Kerouac’s mind. Writing about the novel’s compositional process to Neal Cassady, Kerouac explains that he “Went fast because road is fast” and he “rolled it out on floor and it looks like a road” (*Letters 1940* 315-6). As a marker of social consciousness, Kerouac’s road chronotope of movement and freedom is conjured as a binary against the stasis associated with postwar domesticity. Dean becomes the symbol of the road and its limitless potentiality. He states to Sal, “What’s your road, man?—holyboy road, madman road, rainbow road, guppy road, any road. It’s an anywhere road for anybody anyhow.... I’ll tell you, Sal, straight, no matter where I live, my trunk’s always sticking out from under the bed” (*Road* 251). Dean rushes from coast to coast, away from any fixed place to escape the fixity of society. Of course, cast in the wake of his motoring encounters with domestic spaces Dean leaves plenty of pain behind as well.

In a telling scene between Dean and a group of women that Sal describes as “a sewing circle,” Dean is taken to task for his status as a dead-beat husband and father. Watching Dean being criticized by the women, Sal states, “I suddenly realized that Dean, by virtue of his enormous series of sins, was becoming the Idiot, the Imbecile, the Saint of the lot.... That’s what Dean was, the HOLY GOOF” (*Road* 194). In Sal’s eyes, by debasing the sanctity of the domestic communal space Dean becomes a joke, the idiot

savant who parodies the importance placed on the seriousness of fixed familial structure. Kerouac romantically positions Dean as the liminal trickster, a jester arbitrating the values of the individual on the open road. After the scene plays out, Sal describes Dean “in the doorway, digging the street. Bitterness, recriminations, advice, morality, sadness—everything was behind him, and ahead of him was the ragged and ecstatic joy of pure being” (*Road* 195). But even though Dean temporarily transcends the stasis of domestic space in this episode, he too needs a partner, and Sal provides the link by which his individualism becomes a *communitas*.

Kris Lackey traces the picaresque genealogy of Sal and Dean’s male partnership when writing, “Like the classic picaro, they are not likely to change, but unlike him, they are painfully self-conscious and quite aware of their historical situation, particularly the fevered postwar rush to domesticity” (136). Dean and Sal perform a type of “homosocial flight” (28), one that locates its energies onto the next stop rather than on any given location. Sal and Dean “knew the road would get more interesting, especially ahead, always ahead” (*Road* 279). But Sal knows that the road has to end somewhere, and he imagines a futuristic utopia of domesticity that he can share with Dean. He says to his friend, “All I hope, Dean, is someday we’ll be able to live on the same street with our families and get to be a couple of old timers together” (*Road* 253). Moments later Sal offers that the fixity that he and Dean associate with domestic space may not have been as clear as they once thought. Meditating over familial pictures he states:

I realized these were all the snapshots which our children would look at someday with wonder, thinking their parents had lived smooth, well-ordered, stabilized-within-the-photo lives and got up in the morning to walk proudly on the sidewalks of life, never dreaming the raggedy madness and riot of our actual lives, or actual night, the hell of it, the senseless nightmare road. (*Road* 253-4)

In this passage Kerouac's picaresque chronotope, a way pointing to individualistic and transcendental freedom, comes full circle. Its admission is that by becoming an eventual "nightmare," every good road trip, like the liminoid state of being, must come to an end.

"Other" Time Zones

Spatially traveling in the now, Dean shows Sal the universality of causation when one "lets go" of pensive chronological time in a scene in a car on their way up to New York. He states:

"Everything is fine, God exists, we know time.... It's all *this!*' He wrapped his finger in his fist; the car hugged the line straight and true.... You see what I mean? God exists without qualms. As we roll along this way I am positive beyond doubt that everything will be taken care of for us—that even you, as you drive, fearful of the wheel ... the thing will go along of itself and you won't go off the road and I can sleep. Furthermore we know America, we're at home; I can go anywhere in America and get what I want because it's the same in every corner, I know the people, I know what they do. We give and take and go in the incredibly complicated sweetness zigzagging every side.' There was nothing clear about the things he said, but what he meant to say was somehow made pure and clear." (*Road* 120-1)

To know time is to be in the present moment and Dean's point is that experience will take care of itself, if one lives in the now. Rewards and consequences are treated equally if one accepts that the experience is happening as it is happening, not before or after. In the now, there are no separate locations or people; all belong at home in "America" where "God exists." This is the doubled "state" of utopia that Schechner refers to in describing spontaneous *communitas*, the random moment of ecstasy privileged in the adventure time of the travel novel chronotope. Besides spatial difference, Kerouac shows the contrast of temporality between the partnerships of *communitas* against those of structured society.

In a trip from San Francisco to New York, Dean points out the difference between them and us to Sal in his discussion about a tourist couple traveling with them:

“Now you just dig them in front. They have worries, they’re counting the miles, they’re thinking about where to sleep tonight, how much money for gas, the weather, how they’ll get there—and all the time they’ll get there anyway, you see. But they need to worry and betray time with urgencies false and otherwise, purely anxious and whiny, their souls really won’t be at peace unless they can latch on to an established and proven worry.”
(*Road* 209)

This couple betrays time because they don’t accept it as it comes along; to worry about the future is not to be in step with the present moment. It is the same with the past because it has already happened, and it is important only if it relates to the present moment, its lessons as fleeting as the reflection from the rearview mirror.

In their search for like-minded spontaneous *communitas* groups, Sal and Dean inevitably turn to the “exotic” to find and crystallize their notion of IT in contrast to Western structures. In the familiar thematic stomping grounds of jazz surrogation Kerouac writes:

“Now, man, that alto man last night had IT—he held it once he found it; I’ve never seen a guy who could hold so long.’ I wanted to know what ‘IT’ meant. ‘Ah well’—Dean laughed—‘now you’re asking me impon-de-rables-ahem! Here’s a guy and everybody’s there, right? Up to him to put down what’s on everybody’s mind. He starts the first chorus, then lines up his ideas, people, yeah, yeah, but get it, and then he rises to his fate and has to blow equal to it. All of a sudden somewhere in the middle of the chorus he *gets it*—everybody looks up and knows; they listen; he picks it up and carries. Time stops. He’s filling empty space with the substance of our lives, confessions of his bellybottom strain.... everybody knows it’s not the tune that counts but IT—“ (*Road* 207-8).

As liminoid characters, Sal and Dean assume that African American musicians must be speaking for them. As a liminal model of the exotic, jazz music acts as a stand in for a language for Sal and Dean’s own liminoid desires. But this assumption doesn’t always

carry over with originators of the music, and in a scene with a tenor man after his performance Dean wants to continue the IT of the moment. He says to him, “A ball, you know, I’m just looking for a ball,” to which the tenor man answers, “Yah, what’s good’s a ball, life’s too sad to be ballin all the time ... Shh-eee-it ... I ain’t got no money and I don’t care tonight” (*Road* 200). The fetishization of jazz musicians continues throughout the novel, and, in a one-sentence description of IT and jazz, Kerouac could also be speaking of Sal and Dean in the novel: “They found it, they lost, they wrestled for it, they found it again, they laughed, they moaned” (*Road* 243). In addition to the familiar territory of the jazz club, Kerouac saves his most exotic location for the book’s final great voyage, the trip down to Mexico.

On their way south Dean says to Sal, “Man this will finally take us to IT!,” and it is here that Kerouac makes the most of the liminal symbol of the exotic to transfer his notion of time to his characters and readers (*Road* 265). The culmination of this point happens in the mountains of Mexico where Dean and Sal stop to purchase crystals from local Indian girls. To trade with a young girl Dean “got out of the car and went fishing around in the battered trunk—and pulled out a wristwatch. She whimpered with glee. The others crowded around with amazement. Then Dean poked in the little girl’s hand for “‘the sweetest and purest and smallest crystal she has personally picked from the mountain for me’” (*Road* 298). The purchase of the crystal from the Indian girls to the liminoid characters of Sal and Dean transfers and contrasts the notion of IT in a multi-faceted way. Mortenson notes of the passage that “The ‘American trunk’ situates the wristwatch, itself laden with images of time, in a distinctly U.S. context. Its exchange for the native crystal thus signals a swap of constraining, constructed, American temporality

for the natural, formless production of the Indian itself” (69). Within the tradition of the travel novel chronotope, Mexico is a natural choice for Sal and Dean to end their quest for IT as it is within this exotic location that the partnership breaks up when Sal becomes sick with dysentery and Dean leaves him to go back to America, their life plot of utopian freedom denied. Kerouac would later take up the adventure once again in other novels where he learned to apply the spontaneous symbol of the highway to the form of the fiction itself.

The Romance of “IT”

In addition to the genealogy of Kerouac’s use of the travel novel chronotope, *On the Road* also needs to be understood as a historically situated adaptation of American romance literature, one specifically designed to address the needs and exigencies of a postwar audience. In his book *The American Novel and Its Tradition*, Richard Chase asserts the importance of this phenomenon, arguing that “it is the better part of valor in the critic to understand our American romances as adaptations of traditional novelistic procedures to new cultural conditions and new aesthetic aspirations” (14). To help in accomplishing this task the author outlines key definitions of the genre and applies them to canonical romance authors, including American Renaissance figures like Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. As a liminal cultural depository “Romance is ... a kind of ‘border’ fiction, the field of action is conceived not so much as a place as a state of mind—the borderland of the human mind where the actual and the imaginary intermingle” (Chase 19). In this contested behavioral space, romance literature resides in contradictions rather than resolutions. Chase’s definition of romance echoes Bakhtin’s idea of the novel without emergence when he states, “romance

characters appear really to be given quantities rather than emerging and changing organisms responding to their circumstances”; he also points to the nature of chance in plot structure, writing that “in a romance much may be made of unrelatedness, of alienation and discontinuity, for the romancer operates in a universe that is less coherent” (22). As a historical literary reference, Kerouac represents a continuity of this tradition, albeit in the new cultural interstice of postwar America.

In his book *The Unusable Past*, Russell Reising declares the importance of documenting the ever-changing face of historic literary practices into cultural contexts: “An important problem for theorists of American literature is to elucidate *how* American texts refer to American social forms, and *what* that mode of reference means... What theorists have done in the past is to skirt the issue by declaring social and historical questions ancillary to their projects” (34-5). Providing cultural contexts for historical subjects is a central task of genealogical research, and Kerouac utilizes the romantic tradition to catapult his vision of spontaneity against the perceived constraints of the postwar world. As a romantic borderland fiction, Kerouac’s quest for IT rejects postwar normalcy found in the “company man” of standardized employment and the living conditions of domestic suburbia. In its place, Kerouac’s rhetoric espouses self-independence wrought by emotion, freedom, and nowness. The failure of *On the Road*’s IT, its multiple HITS of experience, is what ultimately makes the book a reservoir of unresolved contrast, the road left up to the reader to wander without answer. In his book, *Jack Kerouac, Prophet of the New Romanticism*, Richard Hipkiss argues that Kerouac “in the final analysis, is the saga of Beatness, of man stranded between an unsatisfactory world and an untenable heaven, somewhere in the void” (134). As a literary precedent,

romance provides Kerouac with a model of this liminal void and his characters do not emerge out of it as a result. This same model provides Kerouac a stage for his plot and character development, a rejection of verisimilitude and the realization that long standing spontaneous *communitas* is an impossibility. Hipkiss notes that “With Dean Moriarty ... life blurs into pure energy, annihilating all form” and that “In Kerouac the relationships of characters are always secondary to the individual quest for Godhead” (96; 131). Kerouac takes the model of romance and makes it his own to serve his own cultural time, a mutated gene best illustrated in contrasting the piece to a poem supplied by another famous literary traveler.

As an updated version of a particular romance artifact, Kerouac’s novel most resembles Walt Whitman’s “Song of the Open Road.” Whitman’s approach to space--“I inhale great draughts of space, / The east and west are mine,”--and time--“Allons! To that which is endless as it was beginningless, / To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights, / To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights/ they tend to/ ...To conceive no time, however distant but what you may reach it and pass/ it” (128; 133)--matches Kerouac’s own approach to the IT of personal revelation. Whitman’s vision is a piece of personal triumph, a call of optimism echoed in the conclusion when he extols his audience by invitation: “Camerado, I give you my hand! / I give you my love more precious than money, / I give you myself before preaching or law; / Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me? / Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?” (135). In postwar America Sal and Dean take up the initiation and ultimately show the futility of “as long as we live,” the romance of travel being the journey, rather than its utopian destination.

How The West Was Done

Despite its spatial disparity, *On the Road* does gravitate towards one particular vortex of behavior popularized in romantic fiction and postwar cinema, the West and its archetypal hero of the American cowboy. Roach writes of these vortices that “Their function is to canalize specified needs, desires, and habits in order to reproduce them” (*Cities* 28). The liminal symbol of the West provides such a function, historically being reproduced and transformed in a number of artistic genres and mass marketing campaigns. Turner notes that because of its symbolic indefinite and transformative nature “liminality is frequently likened ... to the wilderness” (*Ritual* 95). By way of displaced transmission Kerouac explores his own era’s version of this behavioral space by adapting romantic themes and their unresolved contrasts. The West provides the impetus for the twosome’s travel, the American rite of passage laid out to them by the wilderness of liminality.

As part of the romance tradition of the 19th century, it was Fenimore Cooper and his literary hero of Natty Bumppo in the Leather-Stocking novels that best exemplify the myth of the West in the literary imagination of the romantic novel. According to Chase, “In his departures from realism, Cooper is strictly a mythic writer,” and Chase defines literary myth as “a way of sanctioning and giving significance to those crises of human experience which are cultural as well as personal.... It gives significance ... by an emotive appeal to the past, to the traditions of the culture, or to the superhuman powers of heroes” (53). The Leather-Stocking novels include *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Deerslayer* (1841). Natty Bumppo is Cooper’s liminal hero, a man living on the fringes of civilization and

the frontier, an enigma passing for both white and Indian. Cooper was purposefully vague in the creation of his mythic hero, the protagonist and his stories representing an unresolved vision of a literal borderland fiction.

Cooper set the stage for other writers in exploring the personal and cultural contradictions of a frontier fiction. Cooper's hero, according to Chase, personifies that "though his values will be formed by a traditional society ... all social values disappear and are replaced by a strict code of the woods, which entails skill in the lore of the hunt, honor in personal conduct, piety towards nature, stoic forbearance, a sort of programmatic masculinity, and celibacy" (51). At home in society or at home amongst the "savages" in the woods, Cooper's version of the Western hero rejects societal norms despite being formed by them. This contrast of individualism and society lies at the heart of Western myth and its romance. Despite lauding the picaresque beauty of his fiction, D.H. Lawrence criticizes the ease with which Cooper makes his hero capable of living in both of these worlds in his *Studies in Classic American Literature* where he writes, "Pictures! Some of the loveliest most glamorous pictures in all literature. Alas, without the cruel iron of reality. It is all real enough. Except that one realizes that Fenimore was writing from a safe distance, where he could idealise and have his wish-fulfillment" (59). Cooper's distance was accomplished by turning to the past and mythologizing the 18th century from his 19th century romanticized utopian pulpit, a time when the imagination of the wilderness and the West was still in its developing stages. By the time of Kerouac's own 20th century moment, the West would carry the weight of this vision while confronting a vastly different landscape. The hero would still be juxtaposed against

individualism and society, while also being transformed by way of his own contextual cultural oppositions.

In postwar America, the past's romanticized version of the West in reality was a thing of the past. The superhighway replaced the Oregon Trail, widespread urbanization replaced lone settlers and the territory itself was transformed by capital to reproduce the conformity of the civilization long associated with the East. Kerouac's novel is a record of the Western myth and its disillusionment. The author uses romance's ironic disparity to highlight the play and melancholy of approaching the interior of the frontier.

According to Ellis, "For Kerouac is concerned to expose the process whereby the myth of the Western frontier has become essentially bankrupt and ideologically deformed" (37). Sal's naiveties provide the playing ground by which much of this staging area takes place.

In Part One of the novel after "poring over maps of the United States in Patterson for months, even reading books about the pioneers and savoring names like Platte and Cimarron" Sal is finally to leave, picking Route 6 because it represents one long red line all the way to the West coast (10). Fueled by dreams of the frontier Sal sets off to hitchhike to Denver only to find out that Route 6 is a minor highway with little traffic and he is caught in a rainstorm, his first day a disaster. Sal admits that "It was my dream that screwed up, the stupid hearthside idea that it would be wonderful to follow one great red line across America instead of trying various roads and routes" (11). The myth of the big red line to the West is a foreshadowing of Sal's adventures to come, disillusionments and points of comedy showing the rawness of its reality.

Kerouac shows Sal's belief in the myth within his first bus trip out West. Arriving in Iowa he announces, "All winter I'd been reading of the great wagon parties that held council there before hitting the Oregon and Santa Fe trails; and of course now it was only cute suburban cottages of one damn kind and another, all laid out in the dismal gray dawn" (17). During the next stop in Nebraska his enthusiasm rebounds, where in a diner he hears "the greatest laugh in the world" belonging to a farmer and he responds, "Wham, listen to that man laugh. That's the West, here I am in the West.... It was the spirit of the West sitting right next to me" (18, 19). Finally, in Cheyenne Kerouac demonstrates how debased the myth of the West has fallen when his narrator is introduced to the parodic reality of his romantic vision. He arrives during "Wild West" week where "Big crowds of businessman, fat businessman in boots and ten-gallon hats, with their hefty wives in cowgirl attire, bustled and whooped on the wooden sidewalks.... Blank guns went off.... I felt it was ridiculous: in my first show at the West I was seeing to what absurd devices it had fallen to keep its proud tradition" (30). Instead of the authentic performance he was looking for, the town produces the pastiche of its own myth. Like the classic outsider cowboy, Sal intends to rescue a local girl from the town with what he calls "all my strength" after walking her home in a flowerless prairie. The contrast of their spatial myth is recounted in her beginning their exchange: "I want to go to New York. I'm sick and tired of this. Ain't no place to go but Cheyenne and ain't nothing in Cheyenne." "Ain't nothin in New York." "Hell there ain't," she said with a curl of her lips" (33). The comedic playfulness of this irony is that neither wants what the other desires, opportunity and its consequence of conformity in the East, nostalgia and its vacancy in the West. Sal's West doesn't exist, the frontier long being shut down

by the wheels of economic progress and businessmen in ten-gallon hats. The West, as it was romantically conjured by Cooper and others, is gone to Sal; however its hero very much remained.

It was Cooper's Natty Bumppo who laid much of the groundwork from which future Western heroes would be understood and disseminated. As an archetype of the Western hero, Natty's endurance as a character resides in the mythic life crisis of death. D.H. Lawrence observes that Natty "is a man with a gun. He is a killer, a slayer. Patient and gentle as he is, he is a slayer. Self-effacing, self-forgetting, still he is a killer." From this archetype Lawrence argues that the myth promulgates the idea that "The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer." (62; 65). Natty, his long rifle in hand, kills people and nature, but only when he is forced to. Chase observes of Natty's dilemma, "His code does not allow him to plunder, exploit, or kill in hate. Thus a fundamental moral question in Cooper, and in American fiction generally, is one of piety; characters are judged according to whether they have reverence for life.... The novelty in the conception of Natty Bumppo and his descendants is the irony of their personality" (62-3). As a form of genealogy, the contrast of Cooper's hero would further be transformed in the popular imagination, as the myth was adapted from the page to the big screen.

Since 1903's *The Great Train Robbery* film has largely been responsible for the dissemination of the Western myth and its hero, the American cowboy. In her article "The Rhetoric of the American Western Myth," Janice Hocker Rushing sums up the essential contradiction of the cowboy hero paradox that "In almost all expressions of the myth, the Western hero must somehow deal with the paradox of being alone and in a

community. If he does not manifest rugged individualism in all of his crucial actions, he cannot be a hero. Yet if he does not respond to the needs of a community ... he cannot meet the 'goodness' requirements of a hero" (16). This paradox represents the endurance of the Western myth, as it is continually recycled into new historical locales to perpetuate its dialectical conundrum. On the one hand it seeks to preserve the individual solitary stoic killer personality while on the other reinforces the collective need to build values associated with civilization. As culture has transformed, so too has the myth, as Will Wright has documented in his book *Six Guns and Society*.

Wright documents in the period from 1930 to 1955 the use of what he calls the "classical" plot design. According to the author, this plot design was used to make films where the hero comes from outside society and must defeat a villain who threatens the community. Over the course of the film, the hero inevitably wins the respect of the town and a woman to become a full-fledged citizen of society. The hero usually has a talent for violence but only uses it begrudgingly as circumstances dictate and, even after victory, the hero may or may not choose to assimilate into the town to keep his individualism in place. All this slowly changed however around 1950, according to Wright, when three films, *Broken Arrow* (1950), *High Noon* (1952) and *Johnny Guitar* (1954), introduced a new variation of this classic plot, which Wright describes as the liminal "transition" theme. In these films, an inversion of the classical plot takes place. The hero now comes from within society and the evil that he must combat is represented by the townspeople; in the end, the hero must leave society to show the strength of individualism over a corrupt civilization. Rushing notes the importance of this theme by historically situating it within postwar America: "The 'community' ... was transformed

from a dusty frontier town into the corporation situated in the desert of the city.... The 'rags-to-riches' path was still available, according to the American Dream, but there were few who could actually accomplish that without sacrificing their identities to the organization" (20). The 1950s helped alter the myth of the Western hero while also perpetuating its stasis. Wright explains that the transition theme "affirms the fundamental incompatibility of individual strength with social life.... However, it does not show what this alternative is to be" (166). The transition theme is not an answer but an unfulfilled promise, an anticipation of a new structure of society whose values and hero do not look anything like the corrupt civilization from which it came. It is a theme that Kerouac would further explore in conjuring Dean Moriarty as a new symbol of the Western hero living within the corrupt society of postwar America.

Kerouac announces early on his conception of Dean as a mythological cowboy, stating that "My first impression of Dean was of a young Gene Autry—firm, thin-hipped, blue-eyed, with a real Oklahoma accent—a sideburned hero of the snowy West" (*On the Road* 2). The analogy is an early irony in itself as Gene Autry was the ultimate conformist cowboy, while Dean Moriarty would normally be considered as anything but conformist. Together Sal and Dean explore the West, a continuum of the buddy-system twosome long associated with the Western genre. Jones notes of the power of this system that "This pattern, which finds its literary origin near the source of the novel in the structure of the picaresque ... lies at the heart of American male mythology.... an image of the unequal distribution of power between the sexes in Western culture with an exalted—and therefore purified—homosexuality" (241). Dean rescues Sal from the East, a life that had become saturated by campus friends critical of everything. Sal explains of

his new found friend that “Dean’s intelligence was every bit as formal and shining and complete, without the tedious intellectualness” (*On the Road* 7). Dean becomes the needed source of information for Sal by explaining the contrast between the East and the mythological West. He explains the difference between the two regions’ characters by noting the different approaches to signing bathroom walls, “They’re entirely different; in the East they make cracks and corny jokes and obvious references, scatological bits of data and drawings; in the West they just write their names, Red O’Hara, Blufftown Montana, came by here, date, real solemn ... the reason being the enormous loneliness that differs ... as you move across the Mississippi” (*Road* 267). Kerouac positions Dean as the West’s superhero, Sal as his trusty Eastern sidekick.

As an updated version of the mythological cowboy Dean represents much of the same behavioral tropes while still transforming them. Dean is still represented as an outsider to Eastern civilization, an outlaw who transforms the horse thief into a car thief. But even then his intentions are pious, as Kerouac explains that “his ‘criminality’ was not something that sulked and sneered; it was a wild yea-saying overburst of American joy; it was Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long prophesied, long a-coming (he only stole cars for joy rides)” (*Road* 7-8). The cowboy’s horse has become a car, a surrogate symbol that also replaces the gun as his libido. Kerouac writes that Dean’s soul “is wrapped up in a fast car, a coast to reach, and a woman at the end of the road” (*Road* 232). Dean replaces the stoicism of the classic Western cowboy also, as his confessional style cements the importance of friendship between the two characters. Leavitt writes of Dean’s self-disclosures that they “mark a watershed for the western male: a celebration of his ability to reveal self and soul to another man” (217). Together

Sal and Dean's friendship represents an idealized form of spontaneous *communitas* in contrast to that of the social order, one that inevitably breaks down underneath the power of societal constraints. When Dean leaves Sal in Mexico Kerouac writes, "When I got better I realized what a rat he was, but then I had to understand the impossible complexity of his life, how he had to leave me there, sick, to get on with his wives and woes. 'Okay, old Dean, I'll say nothing'" (302). The myth, as represented by the individualism of this Western duo, finally collapses, as a result of their lack of direction. Yet one of the lasting contributions of the novel continues to be the exploration and perpetuation of the Western myth at a unique time of American transformation and cultural crisis. The postwar years and America's role as rising superpower provided its own liminal contradictions while still carrying those provided by the nostalgia of the past. Kerouac's novel of resistance would in turn inspire a generation to take up the wanderings of the roaming heroes depicted in the book during the 1960s. Dean and Sal's collapse would foreshadow that of the counterculture as well. The hippie generation, whose own capital was the freewheeling behavioral space of California, would eventually break down under the burden of hyper-individualism in the form of excessive drug intake and newfound sexual freedoms.

Romancing the Ghost

Vanishing continues to play an important part in the analysis of Kerouac's novel as well, as *On the Road* shows itself to be, in part, a ghost story, the liminal symbol of which weaves its way throughout the narrative. The ghost, apparition, or specter is particularly apt as a performance symbol as it relates to both genealogy and the surrogate actor of the liminal. Brogan articulates that "Culturally concerned with the issues of

communal memory, cultural transmission, and group inheritance, stories of cultural haunting share the plot device and master narrative of the ghost as go-between, an enigmatic transitional figure moving between past and present, death and life, one culture and another” (6). Performance itself is an act of haunting, as the stage relives cultural memory, where stand-ins are used as a means of retelling collective stories. Carlson explains that “one of the universals of performance, both East and West, is its ghostliness.... The present experience is always ghosted by previous experiences and associations while these ghosts are simultaneously shifted and modified by the process of recycling and recollection” (1, 2). Ghosts both haunt individuals and the cultural unconscious as they represent the crisis of life and death and the depository of memory associated with its inevitable cycle. According to Blau, “The recessions of the Ghost are infinite. No matter. We pursue them relentlessly in the ghosting, everywhere back to the overwhelming question: ‘Is there a divinity that shapes our ends?’ It is once again the question of origins” (203). It is precisely this question of origins that Foucault raises in his theory of genealogies, and as a symbol of the historical go-between, the ghost is a particularly apt metaphor of the cultural liminal. Turner writes that in their role as transitional figures, liminal people are “beyond the normative social structure.... It places them too in a close connection with non-social or asocial powers of life and death. Hence, the frequent comparison of novices with ... ghosts, gods, or ancestors.... They are dead to the social world, but alive to the asocial world” (*Theatre* 27). Dean and Sal are in reality dying in the social world of postwar America; haunted by its authoritative patriarchy and its transference onto their own status as white males, *On the Road* is an allegory of performative identity via the ghost tale.

Haunting Whiteness

Race is not an essentialized subject; it is malleable and historically contingent, wrought by discursive transformations. It is performative, instructing discourse to create that which it names by gaining cultural authority from past performances and meanings. The authority and meaning of this racial identification are not fixed, however, and racial identities are altered as sites of discursive agency whenever these repetitions of self are changed or challenged by new performances. In “Doing Whiteness,” John T. Warren situates performativity within his discussion of whiteness when arguing that “Whiteness, while a systemic historical process that is diffuse and abstract, is also located through embodiment—through a repetition of mundane and extraordinary acts that continually make and remake whiteness, all while eluding scrutiny and detection” (92). White subjects are performative in that the label of “white” is discursively arbitrary; its meaning is made up of repetitive symbols and socialized gestures that we come to accept as being part of its existence. But whiteness resists its own scrutiny, often while trying to adopt and maintain the performativity of the racial other. As a performative white subject, Kerouac’s informs his novel by the historical discursive agency of romanticism while also being affected by his own cultural hybridity. His own discursive racial background and his historical moment reveal important references to his subjects and his affinity for the performance of other as an authenticated model of self.

Like many immigrant Americans, an authenticated acceptance into the “white” mainstream was not easily granted to the French-Canadians streaming into the Northeast at the turn of the century. Kerouac was born to two such immigrants in the mill town of Lowell, Massachusetts in 1922. Discursively these Franco-Americans were labeled

derogatively with such terms as “Canuck” and “les blanc nègres” by their puritan neighbors (Nicosia 15). Kerouac grew up as a marginal member of the English speaking community. He was raised speaking the local French-Canadian dialect of *joual* until he was about six or seven, and even at eighteen still spoke English with a halting accent (Douglas 30). Identifying as an outsider came easily to Kerouac, and his identification with racial others was also mitigated by the extraordinary transformation of racial policies during the fifties that resulted from such events as the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision (1954) that banned “separate but equal” schooling, Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott (1955), and the court-ordered desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas (1957), the same year *On the Road* was first published (Lee 161). It was a time when the pall of racism was at the forefront of the collective imagination, like that of slavery a century earlier.

To foreground Kerouac’s approach to racial performance as a liminal and ghostly symbol of identity in the novel, it is important to address the romance tradition and its influence as a source of literary genealogy. In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison notes the importance of the romantic tradition and the literary imagination of the racial other for white audiences. She describes this imagination as a form of “haunting, a darkness from which our early literature seemed unable to extricate itself,” and romance literature “offered platforms for moralizing and fabulation, and for the imaginative entertainment of violence, sublime incredibility, and terror, and terror’s most significant, overweening ingredient: darkness, with all the connotative value it awakened” (37). Both the evil of slavery and the genocide of the Native American helped fuel the imagination of this darkness. The ghost became the symbol for the racialized other as both a meditation and

as an opportunity for surrogation for white writers. Brogan writes that “the ghosts in stories of cultural haunting are agents of both cultural memory *and* cultural renewal: the shape-shifting ghost who transmits erased or threatened group memory represents the creative ongoing process of ethnic redefinition” (12). When whites approach the subject of the racial other as an encounter of the literary imagination, it is an encounter that reveals more about the status of their own whiteness than it does the identity of their “dark” subjects. Morrison asserts, “the subject of the dream is the dreamer. The fabrication of an Africanist persona is reflexive: an extraordinary meditation on the self; a powerful exploration of the fears and desires that reside in the writerly conscious” (17). For Morrison the “Africanist” presence signifies the ways in which white writers approach the black subject and the ways in which they perform their presence in literature. She writes of this “theatrical difference” that “Writers were able to celebrate or deplore an identity already existing or rapidly taking a form that was elaborated through racial difference. That difference provided a huge payout of sign, symbol, and agency in the process of organizing, separating, and consolidating identity along culturally valuable lines of differences” (39).

The ghost became part of this “huge payout” because it allowed white writers a way in which to transcend the stringency of their own whiteness. D. H. Lawrence reflects on the effect of early American writing that “America hurts, because it has a powerful disintegrative influence upon the white psyche. It is full of giring, unappeased aboriginal demons, too, ghosts, and it persecutes the white men ... until the white men give up there absolute whiteness” and later asserts that “The American has got to destroy. It is his destiny. It is his destiny to destroy the white corpus of the white psyche,

the white consciousness. And he's got to do it secretly" (55; 81). This last sentence by Lawrence points to the crux of the white writer approaching the subject of the racial other as a symbolic substitute for the self. The symbol of the racial other, like that of whiteness, is a secret in that it admits itself while also denying its true intentions. Ghosts, like all symbols, can be read on multiple levels. They provide a means by which writers can explore the extraordinary presence of the racial other and its effects on white consciousness without explicitly calling out that it *is* race that fuels its imagination.

As an example of a romance writer who explores the liminal symbol of the ghost as the racial other, Edgar Allen Poe is a classic case in point. Morrison argues, "No early American writer is more important to the concept of American Africanism than Poe" (32). Poe's "Ligeia" provides a stirring reference to the appropriation of the black subject as a measure of white consciousness. As a tale of ghostly possession, Poe relates the story of the death of the narrator's first wife Ligeia, the narrator's second marriage to Rowena, and the reincarnation of Ligeia from that of the dying Rowena. As a surrogate symbol of blackness, Ligeia comes to represent the haunting of whiteness for both Rowena and the narrator. The narrator reports that although her skin is "the purest ivory," Ligeia "came and departed as a shadow," her hair was "raven-black" and her eyes were "far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race.... The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black" (80). Ligeia is a perfect liminal mixing of both black and white, possessing a beauty that both delights and appalls. Ligeia dies, and the guilt associated with the death of his "black" subject prompts the narrator to become drug-addicted. He marries Rowena, a woman described in the opposite racial light of Ligeia's dark beauty. Rowena is "fair-haired and blue-eyed" and the narrator "loathed her with a hatred

belonging more to a demon than to man” (84-5). Poe alludes this emotive response as a hatred of whiteness itself, and from the shadows it is blackness that comes back to evoke its revenge. The bridal chamber, where the transformation takes place, is itself an image of blackness. The couch, tapestry, and bed are “jetty black” which produce “phantasmagoric influences of the chamber itself” (84-5). Ligeia comes back as a phantom to poison the wine that Rowena drinks to die in the black chamber. But the corpse revises itself, and the narrator reveals that it has transformed itself back into that of his original love. Poe ushers in the dramatic ending by having the narrator announce that the hair “*was blacker than the raven wings of midnight*” and in her face he sees “the full, and the black, and the wild eyes—of my lost love—of the Lady—of the Lady Ligeia” (88). “Ligeia” is an allegory of race, a haunting of whiteness perpetuated by the ghost of blackness that rises out of the guilt of Poe’s white unconscious. It is also a secret, one that Poe allows the reader to cast off by allowing that the entire tale may be due to the narrator’s drug addiction. The narrator admits: “I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labors and orders had taken a colouring from my dreams” (84). This statement calls attention to itself because the narrator reveals that even his dreams are colored, illustrating that the subject of the dream is the dreamer himself. The formation of the racial other as a liminal specter allows the author to mediate on the contradictory status of his own whiteness. This ghosting of the other offers a racial reflection back onto the author, prompting a revelation of white identity that reveals symbolic secrets of privilege and self-loathing. It is a romanticized version of the ghost that would continue to haunt Kerouac and his culture well into the next century.

After sleeping in a railroad station during one of his many journeys, Sal announces, “All I could see of the morning was a whiteness like the whiteness of the tombs” (*Road* 106). The power of “whiteness,” and its performativity found within cultural and personal patriarchy, continues to haunt Kerouac’s characters throughout the novel. Like the romanticists a century earlier, Kerouac constructs Dean and Sal’s search for liminal authenticity in the identification and participation with the surrogate other. Kerouac categorizes this other in the novel as the “Fellahin,” a term he picked up from Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*. Kerouac defines the fellahin as “the essential strain of the basic primitive, wailing humanity...the source of mankind” (*Road* 280). Kerouac’s construction of the fellahin and participation in its culture is a means by which he tries to separate himself from the perceived dominant and white center from which he tries to flee. Unlike the fellahin, Kerouac fails to qualify a definition for this center, a failure that continues to permeate as a source of its power. Like the ghost, whiteness is partially invisible, its effects felt more than seen. Warren argues that because of its “unnamed center” whiteness “maintains its power and goes unquestioned, uncritiqued, and unchallenged” (94). Kerouac’s novel does not participate in this silence and instead actively questions what it means to be white and to do whiteness, revealing a depository of questions that the white center of power tends to skirt around or ignore altogether. As a literary genealogy, Kerouac maintains the performativity of the “primitive” other in his romanticized reflection and categorization of the fellahin, but he also explicitly declares the death of wanting to do whiteness, a radical gesture for his age. For Kerouac, like America, is haunted by the historicity of race.

To cast himself as the interlocutor of the racial other in the novel, Kerouac assigns himself the role of Sal (Salvatore) Paradise, an Italian-American who shares similar immigrant roots to his own French-Canadian ancestry. Driving to San Francisco with Dean in California, Sal announces, “the muddy Hudson zoomed by the tents outside Sabinal where I had lived and loved and worked in the spectral past” (*Road* 169). The “spectral” past that he refers to is a love affair that he has with a Mexican girl named Terry that he meets in California in one of his first solo adventures out West. Sal and Terry share a two-week relationship that is a significant reference point in the novel in that it is Sal’s first significant encounter and participation with the “fellahin” people. The two meet in a bus station in Bakersfield and become a couple as they arrive in Los Angeles. Quickly, however, Sal and Terry begin to mistrust one another based on the performatives they assign based on their stereotypes. Sal thinks that Terry might be “a common little hustler,” and because of his misgivings he confesses, “I was like a haggard ghost, suspicioning every move she made” (*Road* 83). The haunting of Sal by Kerouac in the presence of the Mexican girl highlights the cultural distrust between the two. Terry thinks that despite Sal’s looking like “a nice college boy” he may be “a goddam pimp like all of them” (*Road* 84). But the racial haunting that stands between them quickly resurrects itself from individualized exclusion to a type of surrogate marriage. After making love for the first time after their fight, Sal says that they were “two tired angels of some kind” and that they “were together for better or worse” (*Road* 86-7). Based on their new-found trust, Sal agrees to join Terry in Sabinal where they can work with Terry’s son and brother among migrant farm workers.

Terry's brother Rickey's favorite word in his approach to work is "mañana," and Sal says, "For the next week that was all I heard—*mañana*, a lovely word and one that probably means heaven" (*Road* 94). Terry's brother's approach to time is appropriated by Kerouac as another temporal model by which he alludes to the spontaneity of the novel and the surrogation of his identity. Sal abandons the goal-oriented version of horizontal time seemingly promoted by his white culture in favor of the apparent vertical version promoted by the Mexicans among whom he hopes to assimilate. Joining the migrant workers, Sal observes the spontaneous *communitas* of the group: "everywhere I went, everybody was in it together" (*Road* 92). To support Terry and her son, Sal takes a job picking cotton and living in a tent with them among other migrant "families."

Kerouac postures Sal as grossly naïve and incompetent regarding the actual living experience of the work involved. The pay is abysmal and the work is strenuous and Terry and her boy have to come out to the field to help Sal make enough to pay for the day's groceries. Even so, the experience provides a sense of authenticity to the white narrator and he romanticizes, "I had found my life's work.... Sighing like an old Negro cotton picker" (*Road* 96-7). The appropriation of the racial other becomes most significant for Sal in his group identity with the Mexicans. This surrogate cooptation becomes evident when Sal describes the activities of a white family sharing a tent next to him and Terry. He states, "One night the Okies went mad in the roadhouse and tied a man to a tree and beat him to a pulp with sticks.... From then on I carried a big stick with me in the tent in case they got the idea we Mexicans were fouling up their trailer camp. They thought I was a Mexican, of course; and in a way I am" (*Road* 97-8). The irony of this passage resides in the fact that Sal possesses much more in common physically and

culturally with the white “Okies” than with the Mexicans that he so strongly identifies. It also demonstrates that racial authenticity isn’t easily definable. In his discussion of blackness and performance, E. Patrick Johnson argues, “‘blackness’ does not belong to any one individual or group. Rather, individuals or groups *appropriate* this complex and nuanced racial signifier in order to circumscribe its boundaries or to exclude other individuals or groups” (2-3). Kerouac performs both of these functions by having Sal racially cross over the line demarcated by his own whiteness. Like the mulatto, Sal can “pass” as a Mexican because of his dark skin, and by passing, Sal’s identification excludes the white “Okies” that threaten his “Mexican” status. But even so, Sal cannot fully escape his own ethnicity, just as he cannot fully identify with the fellahin people that he so desperately wants to join in the first place.

Soon, Sal admits, “I was through with my chores in the cottonfield. I could feel the pull of my own life calling me back. I shot my aunt a penny postcard across the land and asked for another fifty” (*Road* 98). It is here that Kerouac demonstrates the most lasting historical difference between his and Terry’s ethnic group heritage, and that is Sal’s white dispensation. With the flick of a postcard he requests and receives the money needed to exit one life and enter into another. Sal’s white aunt bails him out, an option Terry and her son do not have. It is this invisibility of white privilege, in this case easily accessible capital, which provides one of the lingering contradictions that Kerouac, the liminoid actor, is haunted by. He accepts it when needed, but feels disillusioned and guilty for the exclusionary wake that it casts. Hence his “spectral past” when he refers to his lost love, the Mexican girl, while acting as a voyeur while in a car later in the novel.

Not coincidentally it is while busing from California and his Mexican identification that Sal is confronted by the morning's whiteness, "like the whiteness of the tombs." The ghost of the Mexican girl continues to haunt Sal as he arrives in Denver on another solo adventure. Alone, it is here that he states, "I saw myself in Middle America, a patriarch." Kerouac's "Middle" America reflects his own liminoid status; the acknowledgement of his patriarchy arouses a self-reflexive survey of his whiteness. Walking in the "colored" section, Sal relates, "I wished I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I was so drearily, a 'white man' disillusioned. All my life I'd had white ambitions; that was why I'd abandoned a good woman like Terry in the San Joaquin Valley" (*Road* 180). "Disillusioned" by his white identity, Sal temporarily transforms his own identity into that of the ghost by meditating on its agency of death. After admitting that he hoped to surrogate himself with the "happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America," Sal bemoans, "It was the Denver Night; all I did was die" (*Road* 180). The narrator metaphorically dies because of his whiteness, a rhetorical kill performed by Kerouac that transforms Sal into the racial ghost himself. By pointing to whiteness as the motive of Sal's death, Kerouac unveils the secret of race that other past romantics, like Poe, seemed mostly just to insinuate. By confessing the subject of the ghost to be his own whiteness, Kerouac provides an important revision to the repetition of the literary trope of the racial specter. But the section also highlights the problems of such an approach to the repetition in the first place. According to Johnson, whites typically "affect a fetishistic 'escape' into the Other to transcend the rigidity of their whiteness, as well as to feed ... commodified blackness" (5). By drawing on romantic discourse, Kerouac falls into the familiar trap of painting

the racial other as somehow more primitive, and as a result, somehow happier. Sal temporarily escapes into the “colored” section only to be confronted with a vision of his own doom, and he quickly turns again to white privilege to run away from it. Sal states, “How I died! I walked away from there. I went to see a rich girl I knew. In the morning she pulled a hundred dollar bill out of her silk stocking.... So all my problems were solved” (*Road* 181). Once again a white woman bails Sal out, and he rushes back to Dean to continue the cycle of escaping because of his whiteness, and retreating back because of its resources and privilege. This cyclical process collapses the performativity of spontaneous identity, as well as the writing form of spontaneous prose itself. This is because Kerouac has to repeat his surrogate encounters, rather than achieving any real or prolonged change.

Dean, too, is an important racial touchstone in the novel. Like Sal, he is white, but unlike Sal, Dean’s class distinction aligns him with the lowest rung, and Kerouac uses his identity to align Dean with marginalized racial groups. Driving by “strange Mexicans in tattered rags” Kerouac writes that Dean “had found people like himself” (*Road* 279). Growing up with a hobo, Dean is dispossessed and because of his outsider authenticity, Sal finds a partner who shares his romance of the racial other. Driving in the American South, Dean passes an “old Negro” in a mule wagon. Dean says excitedly:

Oh yes, dig him sweet; now there’s thoughts in that mind that I would give my last arm to know; to climb in there and find out just what he’s poor-ass pondering about this year’s turnip greens and ham. Sal, you don’t know it but I once lived with a farmer in Arkansas for a whole year, when I was eleven. I had awful chores, I had to skin a dead horse once.... I say all this to show you that of the South I can speak. (*On the Road* 113)

Like Sal, Dean’s discourse points to the repetitive problem of romancing the racial other, as Dean promulgates a stereotype while trying to show his affinity towards the black

character. Dean treats the “old Negro” not as a person, but as a reflection of his own whiteness, a surrogate edging towards transcendental utopia that both he and Sal hope to achieve. After watching a black musician named Slim Galliard who “knows time,” Dean “approached him, he approached his God; he thought Slim was God” (*On the Road* 177). This is a consistent categorization assigned by Dean and Sal; non-whites are otherworldly, possessing mystical wisdom that the twosome appropriate.

The culmination of the fellahin as the white man’s sage occurs at the end of the novel when Sal and Dean enter Mexico. Sal casts the people and the land as surrogate answers for both himself. He states, “Old men sat on chairs in the night and looked like ... oracles.... We had finally found the magic land at the end of the road and we never dreamed of the magic” (*Road* 275-6). Of course, Kerouac is indeed dreaming, and discursively he relies on essentialist categorizations to paint the picture of the people with whom Sal and Dean come into contact. Despite the “magic” of the land, Dean and Sal decide to endorse the commodification of its people, spending hours at a local bar and being “serviced” by prostitutes. Later, they meet the Indian girls selling crystals. Sal says, “They were like the eyes of the Virgin Mother when she was a child” (*Road* 297). Again, Kerouac draws on mystic symbology to describe the racial other, and this time he makes his point by surrogating a little girl to the Virgin Mother, one of the weightiest historical markers of female “purity.” The use of Biblical references continues as a means of categorizing the fellahin as Kerouac prophesizes:

For when destruction comes to the world of ‘history’ and the Apocalypse of the Fellahin returns once more as so many times before, people will still stare with the same eyes from the caves of Mexico as well as from the caves of Bali, where it all began and where Adam was suckled and taught to know. (*Road* 280)

Kerouac marks off the death of Western, white “history” in apostrophes and points to its causation, the “Apocalypse of the Fellahin.” The apocalypse ushers in death, and once again people, like the Biblical “white” Adam, will transform back to the fellahin via ascension. In his vision of the apocalypse Kerouac longs for the day when people of “history,” and white history in particular, will become ghosts. He hopes that death, including his own, will usher in the social liminality that he so longs for.

Looking back on Kerouac’s description of the racial other with contemporary hindsight, it is quite possible to cast him off as just another white writer misappropriating his ethnic subjects with romanticized rose-colored glasses. Of course, Kerouac is guilty of such a charge in his novel. Even so, *On the Road* and Kerouac’s performance of the racial ghost need to be understood as historically situated. His performance is historiographically built upon other past literary uses of the trope, a repetition that he revises by explicitly and self-reflexively addressing the status of his own whiteness within the lived experience of postwar culture. James Snead argues that the act of repetition as a cultural transformation is either “a ‘progression,’ if positive, or a ‘regression,’ if negative” (213). Kerouac’s genealogy of the surrogate ghost as a literary symbol provokes either and/or both responses. Still, Kerouac’s description of white identity shows that it is indeed performative, and therefore malleable as a means of historical and personal appropriation. As romance writers and Kerouac’s *On the Road* move to show us, it is not the answers, but the questions that continue to haunt us.

My Father The Ghost

In Des Moines on his first bus trip out West, Kerouac describes his first transformation into a ghost during the morning at a hotel. He confesses:

I woke up as the sun was reddening; and that was the one distinct time in my life, the strangest moment of all, when I didn't know who I was—I was far from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I'd never seen ... and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and really didn't know who I was for about fifteen strange seconds. I wasn't scared; I was just somebody else, some stranger, and my whole life was a haunted life, the life of a ghost. I was halfway across America, at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future, and maybe that's why it happened right there and then, that strange red afternoon. (*Road* 15)

Here at the “dividing line” between youth and the future Kerouac thinks of himself as haunted. During this adolescent space personal identity is itself highly self-reflexive, often times painfully self-aware, questioning both the stock of the past and what yet holds for the future. It is in this liminal vacuum that the ghost thrives. Gordon points out that “haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively ... into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition” (8). Sal and Dean's story is in part recorded as this transformative affect of the ghost, the largest specter of which is the father who haunts them both and in the end contributes to Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady's own status as liminal ghosts. For there is one more means by which the specter haunts the materiality of Kerouac's body, and that is the gender in which his “white” body resides.

In her book *Mourning Sex*, Peggy Phelan observes that “As an art form whose primary function is to meditate on the threshold that heralds between-ness, theatre encourages a specific and intense cathetic response in those who define themselves as liminal tricksters, socially disenfranchised, sexually aberrant, addicted, and otherwise queerly alienated from the law of the father” (16). Much of the plot development and the movement of *On the Road*, the reason why they travel, and the encounters of apparitions

themselves follow this supposition regarding the “law” of the father. Dean and Sal are haunted by the symbol of the father, the ghosts of whom appear as performances of their losses and of their cultural patriarchy. This is one of the clearest bonds that both men share. Kerouac’s father died in 1946 and on his deathbed had Jack swear that he would take care of his mother for the rest of his life, a transference of patriarchy that would continually haunt Kerouac and his relationships with women. Neal Cassady’s father was an absentee hobo, a man whose ghost provides much of the pretext for his own son’s travel and the surrogate actor to which Kerouac transferred his own search for the father. This search works on a cultural level as well, and Swartz notes that the “lost father symbolizes, in this time of atomic threat, the loss of authority or the loss of faith that Americans had in a figure that they could turn to for guidance and comfort” (19). Lacking this same comfort, Sal and Dean are instead left in the liminal void of postwar America, the space from which the paranormal roamed freely.

Old Dean Moriarty the Tinsmith, Dean’s father, is somewhere out there in America and like a ghost remains hauntingly unseen but always felt by the twosome. In New York after Ed Dunkel tells Sal that “Last night I walked clear down to Times Square and just as I arrived I suddenly realized I was a ghost—it was my ghost walking on the sidewalk,” Kerouac uses the liminal symbol to transition into describing Dean’s father. He writes: “Where was his father?—old bum Dean Moriarty the Tinsmith, riding freights, working as a scullion in the railroad cook shacks, stumbling, down-crashing in wino alley nights, expiring on coal piles, dropping his yellowed teeth one by one in the gutters of the West” (*Road* 132). Ed Dunkel’s ghost appears eight pages later, again ushering in a description of the disappearance of Dean’s father. After Ed Dunkel talks to

himself in the window by saying, “Yes sir, I thought I was a ghost that night,” Dean relates a particular episode: ““One time I rode a freight from New Mexico to LA—I was eleven years old, lost my father at a siding ... my father was out drunk in a boxcar—it started to roll ... I missed it—I didn’t see my father for months. I rode a long freight all the way to California, really flying.... you can imagine how dangerous, I was only a kid, I didn’t know”” (*Road* 140). Actually Dean, and by extension Sal, still doesn’t know whether his father is alive or not. This liminal status of the tinsmith only multiplies the weight of his imagination on their own search for identity. Kerouac describes the transference of this search in Denver by relating, “I passed the Windsor Hotel, where Dean Moriarty had lived with his father in the depression thirties, and as of yore I looked everywhere for the sad and fabled tinsmith of my mind. Either you find someone who looks like your father in places like Montana or you look for a friend’s father where he is no more” (*Road* 179). No more seen, but everywhere felt, the father looms like a shadow everywhere the friends travel. At night driving in the car Dean sees the ghost again, “But hey, look down there in the night thar, hup, hup, a buncha old bums by the fire by the rail, damn me.’ He almost slowed down. ‘You see, I never know whether my father is there or not.’ There were some figures by the tracks, reeling, in front of a woodfire. ‘I never know whether to ask. He might be anywhere”” (*Road* 233). The haunting builds to a point of possession as well, as both Dean and Sal become the ghosts that so doggedly chase their consciousness. In Denver Kerouac describes Dean in a bar and the power of this transference by writing: “He’d lived here with his father in one of the rooms upstairs. He was no tourist. He drank in this saloon like the ghost of his father; he slopped down wine, beer, and whisky like water” (*Road* 263). The ghost of Dean’s father also acts as a

warning for the liminoid twosome, as his patriarchal presence inevitably bleeds into their own failures as partners and fathers. Haunted by the weight of this ancestral presence, Kerouac's novel implicitly questions whether he and Dean are doomed to make the same mistakes, whether or not they are assigned the role to perform the same histories.

Kerouac's exploration of the ghost also manifests itself as a multivocal symbol to defamiliarize the figure of the ancestral father and its weight of patriarchal performance on the unconscious level. At the end of Part One on his way back home from the West coast, Sal encounters the Ghost of the Susquehanna in Harrisburg outside of Pittsburgh. Kerouac writes: "The Ghost was a shriveled little old man with a paper satchel who claimed he was headed to 'Canady.' He walked very fast, commanding me to follow, and said there was a bridge up ahead we could cross" (*Road* 104). The bridge itself represents an important liminal symbol as the ghost tries to usher Sal towards a place where he can finally cross to the other side. Following the ghost as he tells his past experiences, the incident quickly becomes one of dreadfulness as he relates, "We were bums together. We walked seven miles along the mournful Susquehanna. It is a terrifying river.... Any minute I expected the poor little madman to go flying in the night, dead. We never found that bridge.... I thought all the wilderness was in the West till the Ghost of the Susquehanna showed me different" (*Road* 104-5). The ghost, as a symbol of the father, is shown to be just as fallible in his inability to find the right path out of the wilderness for the surrogate son. West or East, Kerouac becomes disillusioned with the wilderness, and this sense of disillusionment extends to the father as master narrative. After abandoning the ghost, he rhetorically asks, "Isn't it true that you start your life a sweet child believing everything under your father's roof? Then comes the day of the

Laodiceans, when you know you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, and with the visage of a gruesome grieving ghost you go shuddering through nightmare life” (*Road* 106). Eventually Sal must lose his belief in the hegemony associated with the father and come to grips with the patriarchal performance cast in his shadow’s wake. A figure representing this disillusionment during the postwar years was Dwight Eisenhower, the paternal war hero and President of the United States. He was a figure that a young college dropout wrote to with a buddy stating, “Dear Eisenhower, We love you—You’re the great white father... We’d like to fuck you” (Halberstam 296). Unfortunately for the dropout, Jack Kerouac, his own *Road* novel shows that the ghost of the father often becomes the ghost of the son. Kerouac’s performative utterance to Eisenhower effectively provides an alternative to the discursive reverence typically associated with the figure and stations often times occupied by the white male “father.” However, as a measure of doing, both he and his characters are never able to live out what that alternative may be.

This is a point that Kerouac returns to throughout the novel as the lesson of the ghost won’t go away because neither Sal or Dean is successfully able to cross the bridge out of their liminoid dilemma. Later in a racetrack in Louisiana with Old Bull Lee (William Burroughs), Kerouac plays with this multivocal symbol by transforming the father into that of a racehorse. Reading the *Racing Form* for horse names, Sal tells Bull that “Big Pop reminds me of the father,” a horse that Lee thinks about but doesn’t bet on and that goes on to win and pays fifty-to-one. After the race Lee admonishes “Damn!.... You had a vision, boy, a *vision*. Only damn fools pay no attention to visions. How do you know your father, who was an old horseplayer, just didn’t momentarily

communicate to you that Big Pop was going to win the race?" (*Road* 153). Kerouac's point is to acknowledge that we are all in contact with the dead, that seemingly spontaneous actions, like his prose, are in reality carefully selected messages brought to us by the other side. His writing provides the record of the ghost as an act of the unconsciousness.

Back in San Francisco, Kerouac relates the apparition of Big Pop to the transference of the patriarchal ghost from the father to the son. Passing a food joint he conjures the proprietress as his mother from two hundred years ago. Kerouac writes the response of the mother to the son and its connection to the racehorse: "'No,' don't come back and plague your honest, hard-working mother. You are no longer like a son to me—and like your father.... You are no good.... Do not haunt my soul; I have done well forgetting you.... It made me think of the Big Pop vision in Graetna with Old Bull Lee" (*Road* 172-3). Kerouac shows the inherent danger of the specter as the father becomes the son, both of whose patriarchies haunt the mother and by extension all of the women whom Sal and Dean "gamble" to come across. Not being able to exorcise the ghost of their fathers, and by extension their own guilt, fear permeates the twosome, and the author goes on to explore the ultimate expression of this trepidation as the apparition becomes a signifier of death itself.

Sal recalls a dream he had of an apparition he calls the "Shrouded Traveler:"

It haunted and flabbergasted me, made me sad. It had to do somewhat with the Shrouded Traveler. Carlo Marx and I once sat down together, knee to knee, in two chairs, facing, and I told him a dream I had about a strange Arabian figure that was pursuing me across the desert; that I tried to avoid; that finally overtook me just before I reached the Protective City.... Something, someone, some spirit was pursuing all of us across the desert of life and was bound to catch us before we reached heaven. Naturally, now that I look back on it, this is only death: death will

overtake us before heaven. The one thing that we yearn for in our living days, that makes us sigh and groan and undergo sweet nauseas of all kinds, is the remembrance of some lost bliss that was probably experienced in the womb and can only be reproduced (though we hate to admit it) in death. But who wants to die?... I told it to Dean and he instantly recognized it as the mere simple longing for pure death; and because we're all of us never in life again, he, rightly, would have nothing to do with it, and I agreed with him. (*Road* 124)

Sal's self-analysis may be correct, but his feigning attempt to agree with Dean's denial proves to be more problematic. Hunt notes of the passage, "The fact is, Sal and Dean do want to die just as they want to live and Sal's interpretation avoids recognizing this conflict. Dean's strategy is to ignore and avoid the recognition of death if at all possible, and this is his advice to Sal" (31). Neal Cassady did deny death according to the fragments he wrote and that were published as part of his autobiography *The First Third*. In it he writes, "To have seen a specter isn't everything, and there are death-masks piled, one atop the other, clear to heaven. Commoner still are the wan visages of those returning from the shadow of the valley. This means little to those who have not lifted the veil" (146). This is a complicated passage, as Cassady both avows and refuses death. Cassady may have lifted the veil but in refusing its ghost he ultimately fails to see himself in its reflection. By denying death to fulfill the perpetual IT of his existence, Cassady ultimately invited death prematurely and, like Kerouac, met his fate at an early age. In February of 1968 Neal died while walking on a train track from overexposure and an overdose of alcohol and drugs near a town called Celaya in Mexico. He was forty-two, an age typically associated with the mid-life crisis for many males.

Cassady may have denied the power of the ghost, but Kerouac certainly did, and he transfers its power onto his best friend towards the novel's final voyage. He writes, "Suddenly I had a vision of Dean, a burning shuddering frightful Angel, palpitating

toward me across the road ... like the Shrouded Traveler on the plain, bearing down on me. I saw his huge face over the plains ... I saw his wings; I saw his old jalopy chariot with thousands of sparking flames shooting out from it; I saw the path it burned over the road" (*Road* 259). The passage reads like a scene of the four horsemen from the apocalypse and Dean, as an angel of death, has now become the surrogate symbol of the ghost. This liminal transference is exemplified in a scene from the jungle in Mexico.

Sleeping on the hood of a car Sal announces that suddenly he:

heard the faint clip-clop of a horse's hooves. It came closer and closer. Then I saw an apparition: a wild horse, white as a ghost, came trotting down the road directly toward Dean.... I felt no panic for Dean. The horse saw him and trotted right by his head, passed the car like a ship, whinnied softly, and continued on through town ... and clip-clopped back to the jungle on the other side.... What was this horse? What myth and ghost, what spirit? (*Road* 295)

Like Big Pop, the horse appears as a phantom and its association with the father heads directly for Dean, who while in Mexico leaves Sal. Like the ghost of the Susquehanna, Kerouac shows the disillusionment of surrogate patriarchy, this time as it is extended into the figure of his best friend. On his way back home from Mexico the ghost makes its final appearance, appearing to Sal in a liminal border town just inside Texas. The "tall old man with flowing white hair" comes "clomping" by like the apparition of the horse, and when he sees Sal says simply, "*Go moan for man*," before disappearing into the night (*Road* 303). Finally, the torch has been passed and Kerouac is left only to go and write about the liminoid experiences that he has borne.

Giamo argues that the ghost's message "is no less than an admission that all life is suffering; this is where the road begins and ends, and the various detours around such a condition and first principle can only result in a peace that is hollow and restless. The

mission of the writer is therefore discerned” (41). *On the Road* does accomplish this task in part, as the author and his friend’s utopian search for a spontaneous communitas is shown to come crashing to a halt at the end, a warning in part to others who might want to live their lives in the same liminoid shoes. Turner notes, “In closed or structured societies, it is the marginal or ‘inferior’ person or the ‘outsider’ who often comes to symbolize ... ‘the sentiment of humanity’” (*Ritual* 111). Through the process of historical surrogation, Kerouac’s exploration of the ghost is exemplary of this role as it both cajoles and teaches the benefit and cost of personal transformation. In postwar culture, the fascination of the liminal messenger would further be permeated in the arts by the multivocal symbol of the paranormal in society.

The Alien as Other

For postwar culture this manifestation would be made not by the ghost but by the alien as science fiction took its hold on the popular imagination. In this era of the red scare, Sputnik, and the “Roswell Incident” the alien as other became popular in both literature and film. The publishing industry began in earnest to produce paperback novels instead of magazine articles and short story writers turned their work into novel length ideas, helping the genre turn into one of the staples of bookstores today (Roberts 81). In film, around 500 features and shorts were made, making science fiction one of the most popular and fastest growing genres in history (Lucanio 1). Much of this popularity is attributed to the political allegory of the genre and the political climate of the postwar years. Whereas science fiction writers historically used to extol the powers of technology to produce a utopian golden age, postwar writers began to question the genre’s assumptions. *Science Fiction* critic Adam Roberts defines the postwar science fiction

writers as part of a historical “New Wave” and situates them genealogically in describing that “If ‘Golden Age’ SF mirrors the bullishness of the American experience of the 1940’s, there are many examples of the 1950s SF that mirror an increasing unease.... This climate of political paranoia, with its fearful conformity and obsessive focusing on the Alien as Enemy, fed directly through in SF imaginations” (79-80). Works like Jack Finney’s *Body Snatchers* (1955), which was turned into the cult classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), were read in part as an allegory of the evils of communism, where seemingly normal looking suburbanites were in fact diabolical aliens looking to wipe out American culture. But once the fear of the McCarthy hearings began to wane and was shown to be a political propaganda witch-hunt, the genre re-explored the issues that were raised in its earlier assumptions. Aligning some of the writers with the contributions made by other postwar artistic innovators, Roberts notes that “In place of a rationalistic belief in the effectiveness of technology and machinery ... there came an avant-garde ... fascination with the artistic possibilities of ... a paranoid aesthetic in which all large systems were seen as the enemies of individual difference” (81-2). Like the decade’s literary genesis, cinema would further repeat this rhetorical trope. Like its counterpart in Western movies, the alien as cultural other would first be constructed as an outside invasion against society. Later, the alien as other would be construed as the liminal prophet sent to stand up against the evils of society itself.

Profiting on the xenophobia in the early part of the era, films such as *The Red Menace* (1949), *The Red Danube* (1949), and *I Married a Communist* (1949) made the fear of the communist as cultural other a conscious explicit (Lucanio 164). The alien invasion film became its implicit surrogate partner. In a number of films such as

Invaders from Mars (1953) and *It Came from Outer Space* (1953) the alien or aliens are depicted as being bent on the destruction of the earth and/or the enslavement of the populace. Usually the aliens come, a climatic fight takes place where they are defeated, and the populace is awakened to the reality that they are not alone. Of course, ghosts provide the same function of this message and Lucanio provides another important correlation between the two liminal figures in listing “the contest and death and rebirth” as a major motif of alien invasion films (21). As an example of this motif and for its importance as a transitory artifact of reexamining the role of the postwar cultural other, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) particularly stands out. The film, which was directed by Robert Wise and released by Twentieth Century-Fox, is unique in at least two specific ways. One is that it was one of the last big-budgeted films of the era, which were produced in large part by small studios. Secondly, the film was one of the first to depart from this profitable formula. In the film the alien Klaatu, accompanied by his robot companion Gort, comes to the earth as an ambassador from an organization of planets to teach them a way in which they can achieve peace. Klaatu’s message is that although they themselves are not perfect, the aliens that he represents have been able to achieve peace by giving full control over to a police force of robots like Gort and that the earthlings should do so as well because their violent nature threatens the universe. Klaatu is shot and killed by some nervous soldiers but is later resurrected with the help of Gort to deliver his final message before the twosome leave. As a liminal outsider figure, Klaatu is one of the first aliens to be shown as being benign; his death and rebirth cast him both as a Christ like figure and as a ghost, one who provides the message of humanity to lead their lives peacefully. In a world of cold war tension, Klaatu’s message

is that for the earthlings to achieve peace they must give up control to a neutral political body and the threat of the robotic police force achieves this means. The movie is an inversion of the classic alien invasion movie plot, one where it is society that must be feared and it is the alien that offers a cultural solution.

Kerouac might very well have seen it. In his “Essentials” text he writes that “Modern bizarre structures (science fiction, etc.) arise from language being dead,” showing that he was at least aware of the popularity of science fiction as a genre. Professional animosity aside, he too took a stab at the genre, producing his only science fiction story “cityCityCity,” which was first published as a short story in 1959, and published with a new revised ending in *Good Blonde & Others* in 1993. The story is an allegory of the communist hunt of his era, as he explains to Allen Ginsberg that he “wrote it during Army McCarthy hearings and so it has wildly hip political flavor” (*Letters 1940* 495). In the revised ending M-80, the name of the story’s hero, escapes an autocratic overpopulated earth based in the twenty-eighth century that electrocutes whole city blocks randomly as part of the government regulations. The population is controlled by Master Center Love that is in full control of the media and the distribution of love drugs as part of the mandatory deactivation that keeps people confined to their city blocks and “safe” from the chaos of activation agents outside of earth. Kerouac’s choice regarding the representation of these activation agents is telling in that it accentuates performance’s role as an apparition of liminal identity. He writes of these agents that they are “beings on a level of certain rarity that enabled them to swim, veil-like, pale as ghosts.... These Beings, these Activation Agents, were ... called Actors” (“city” 197-8). To be deactivated from these actors means to be scorned by society but also to be able to

achieve personal autonomy, “Loveless Brothers” are the future earth’s Beats, described in part as bums and also as junkies. Kerouac correlates the actors as a type of drug, “Actor Fumes, or Ghost, as it was called” that produces the effect of “Activation spooks with their head-in-the-clouds attitude towards realities of life” (“city” 199, 200). At the end of the story we learn that with the help of his father T-3, M-80 is able to escape the electrocution of his block and the earth itself from a rocket ship because unlike the rest of the population, he was never activated when he was born. From a letter from his now dead father he reads, “It was my life’s dream to see that you would get out of the Overpopulated Totalitarian trap. I can only say now that the attendant who omitted to Deactivate you was *not* an attendant, but some form of awakened ghost, the first of many to come to earth.... OUR REWARD IS WITHOUT END, and it comes to us in some ghostly afterway” (“city” 213). Kerouac succeeds in incorporating the science fiction genre’s theme of death and rebirth while also including the ghost as liminal actor. Along with the specters of *On the Road*, this story highlights the role of performance as an edifice of identity. This ghosting agent, the liminal “actor” that haunts humanity, is also shown to provide its redemptive agency. The liberation associated with this process occurs in its own eventual experience of transference into that of the ghost.

Conclusion

On the Road is neither here nor there; its title refers not to a starting point or a destination. It is a meditation, instead, on liminal phenomena. The novel itself occupies a unique literary position; being held up for years as a marginalized cult classic, the novel has now become a canonical representation of postwar literature. It has sold millions of copies and has been translated into scores of languages, but despite its overwhelming

acceptance, Kerouac himself once described the novel as “the one I wrote 1951 where we make those transcontinental wild trips written in simple old prose” (*Letters* 1940 358). Here Kerouac refers to his now infamous scroll version, a literary performance that has become mythically synonymous with the popularity of *On the Road*. But this scroll version is only one of at least five different revisions, and the novel itself was written only as Kerouac’s method of spontaneous prose was still in its early phase. Kerouac himself asserted that the novel was a “horizontal account of travels on the road” (Ellis 43). Despite this coming from the author himself, the novel has historically been seen as Kerouac’s classic; its staying power as an expression of spontaneity is not found as readily in its form as in its subject material. As an analysis of the novel’s spontaneous and liminal symbols, *On the Road* has been approached in this chapter as a literary genealogy, one that matriculates its voice from two literary antecedents.

As a means of foregrounding Kerouac’s approach to the performance of time and space in the novel, Bakhtin’s travel novel chronotope is introduced to historically link *On the Road* with literary genres that also place their spatio-temporal direction on movement and adventure time. As in the picaresque novel, Sal and Dean don’t actually evolve as characters, their temporal immediacy dictates that they must continually recycle the flashes of *communitas* that they experience in their quest for “IT.” It is a novel of contradictions, much like the liminal stage of identity itself. Kerouac’s interrogation of these contradictions places the novel as an adaptation of American romance literature, one genealogically updated to address the needs of his postwar audience. Kerouac’s investigation of the West and cultural haunting provide the means by which his characters hope to achieve performative identity transformation in contrast to the culture

in which they reside. But because these tropes are based on a grand narrative of personal emancipation that is only achieved in flashes rather than longevity, they too often fail the novel's heroes.

For these reasons, then, Kerouac felt the need to go beyond the restrictions of his *Road* novel, which he describes as being both "simple" and "old." As their antonyms would suggest, Kerouac was striving for complexity and freshness. *On the Road*, in Kerouac's eyes, occupies the former definition because it relies so heavily on past literary traditions as in the picaresque and romance models described here. In *On the Road*, Kerouac is only beginning to scratch at the surface of what he wants to call a spontaneous fiction. This surface level quality is suggested by his mediation of spontaneity as a series of subjects, rather than in the writing form itself. In other words, *On the Road* merely *describes* spontaneity, its prose does not *do* it itself. To gain a greater appreciation of his writing method and Kerouac's status as an author, we have to go beyond holding up *On the Road* as his exemplary performance of the novel. It wasn't, and he himself says so.

Part of the reason why the novel fails for Kerouac is because it doesn't achieve the performative fidelity conditions that he himself describes in "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose." For one, *On the Road* is a novel that takes many forms. It appears as the separately published *Pic* and *Visions of Cody*, which shows that Kerouac was continuously re-working the material over a number of years. The depth of this reworking process suggests that as a novel, *On the Road* is actually the antithesis of the immediacy that Kerouac suggests as part of his sketching method. Another fidelity condition that the novel doesn't live up to is based upon the character's inability to transform. Dean and Sal are in fact "stuck" within the liminoid condition that occupies

them. Instead of doing the things that they hope will assign them transformations over a sustained amount of time, they too often times rely on description. This description often times comes in the form of surrogation where Dean and Sal try to appropriate other models from historically disenfranchised groups, all while still relying on their own cultural dispensation. Their experiences then, often times read as technique rather than as an authentic lived experience. They are therefore disingenuous to the performative condition that “*your way is your only way ... because not ‘crafted’*. Craft *is* craft,” Kerouac describes in his “Essentials.”

Both of these fidelity failures are a result of Kerouac’s not yet being able to put the subject of spontaneity into the writing structure itself. For Kerouac is interested in capturing the lived experience of his subjects rather than relying on fleeting descriptive qualities. To push beyond the confines of his *Road* novel, Kerouac needed a way in which to capture the performative doing of spontaneity, and the ontological representation of the novel itself became a large part of this goal. As a means of articulating the difference between *On the Road*’s “horizontal account” to the verticism he describes in his “Essentials” text, Kerouac himself provides his readers a means of understanding the competing approaches side by side. Written after his scroll version, *Visions of Cody* provides the crowning achievement for Kerouac’s meditation on Neal Cassady as subject and as a collaborator. It is a novel where Kerouac was able to begin to transform his spontaneous subjects into the form of writing itself. In turn, these *Visions* and the questions they raise offer the record by which Kerouac can be understood as transitioning from writing about performances, to becoming a performative writer himself.

Chapter Four: Revising the *Visions of Spontaneity*

That Kerouac preferred the writing he was to accomplish in *Visions of Cody* to that of the “simple old prose” of *On the Road* can be seen in one of his most public of performances in 1959. Riding the crest of popularity fashioned by the publication of his *Road* novel, Kerouac was scheduled to perform a section of the book with piano accompaniment from Steve Allen on his self-titled *The Steve Allen Show*. While America watched and listened Kerouac instead read a section of *Visions of Cody* that he had taped into the novel that he was supposed to be reading. The performance went off without a hitch, the host or audience not familiar enough with the novel to know that they had been duped. Kerouac’s performance was a way of subverting the “beat icon” label that had been pinned on him after the publication of *On the Road*, as well as a way for him to reject the idea that the novel was his climatic achievement.

Kerouac rejected both ideas, and he writes to his editor in 1957, the same year *On the Road* was published, that “ROAD ought to soften the public for the real business at hand” (*Letters* 1957 55). The “real business at hand” for Kerouac was the publication of his spontaneous novels, starting with the revision of *On the Road* into *Visions of Cody*. Soon after discovering his spontaneous prose method in 1951, Kerouac realized that he had to rework his meditations on Neal Cassady, and, from 1951-52 he did so, producing his final version of his “road” material into the book we today call *Visions of Cody*. Parts of the novel were published as shorter pieces, but the novel would not be published in its entirety until McGraw-Hill issued it in 1972, three years after Kerouac’s death. To explain his impetus for changing the material, Kerouac states that:

Visions of Cody is a 600 page character study of the hero of *On the Road*, “Dean Moriarty,” whose name is now “Cody Pomeray.” I wanted to put my hand to an enormous paean which would unite my vision of America with words spilled out in the modern spontaneous method. Instead of just a horizontal account of travels on the road, I wanted a vertical, metaphysical study of Cody’s character and its relationship to the general ‘America.’ (Introduction 1)

To achieve his goal, Kerouac utilized spontaneous prose not solely as a descriptive act, but as a performative agency. The writing itself becomes the subject of the materials he was revising, allowing him to produce the communicative significance he was striving to attach to Cody and his version of America. *Visions of Cody* then is Kerouac’s first novel-length attempt to make the medium as much, if not more, the focus of his performance as the message itself.

In *Visions of Cody*, Kerouac shows the incredulity that he had for the horizontal approach of *On the Road* from the outset, as the book’s “Chapters” break down into five different parts, although none explicitly follows another. The book is instead a collage of impressions, a fulfillment of a desire that he conveyed to Neal Cassady: “Then I began to think: who’s laid down the laws of ‘literary’ form? Who says that a work must be chronological; that the reader wants to know what happened anyhow.... Let’s tear time up. Let’s rip the guts out of reality” (*Letters 1940* 274). Of the five parts of the novel, the first two are numbered, while the third is numbered and titled, followed by the final two sections which are void of chronological numbers and are separated only by titles. Kerouac’s presentation of the book shows the reader his desire to break the “laws” of literary form and to go beyond the horizontal structure of the novel that came before.

Of course breaking the law, even if literary, does have its consequences. *Visions of Cody* is the victim of *On the Road*'s success, as early readers misjudged the former novel's merits by judging it according to the same modernist picaresque qualities that made *On the Road* so successful. Even Kerouac's most trusted friends at first rejected the novel. Acting as an early pseudo literary agent, Ginsberg wrote to Kerouac about the book: "I don't see how it will ever be published.... I think book is great but crazy in a bad way, and got, aesthetically and publishing-wise, to be pulled back together, reconstructed" (*Letters 1940* 372-3). Of course later, after he discovered his own means to adapt Kerouac's spontaneous method to produce his poem *Howl*, Ginsberg celebrated the novel and wrote an essay entitled "The Visions of The Great Rememberer" that was included in the publication of *Visions of Cody*. Early literary critics could be just as dubious in their discussion of the novel, as Robert Hipkiss writes in 1976, just four years after its publication, that the prose is "often vividly presented but never developed, either analytically or with added layers of perception" and that the novel is "most likely ephemeral" (83-4; 136). Kerouac's prose is often "ephemeral," but what Hipkiss fails to understand is that this is Kerouac's goal. It is precisely because of the novel's ephemeral direction that it provides an added layer of perception as to what the novel's imagination can do and to how it can be done by means of performative writing.

Life, as well as its memory, is largely lived and performed by means of its ephemeral experience. Recognizing this, Kerouac tries to capture the fleeting nature of performance in the structure of his novel and by means of his literary experimentations. To highlight this quality in his own work, Kerouac turns to the performative as a form of his writing. This chapter details the means, as well as some of the effects, through which

the author approaches this goal. Specifically, this chapter addresses how Kerouac's use of spontaneous prose articulates his turn towards a fiction that critics would later call "postmodern," one that utilizes performative writing as a form of post-literacy and as a form of live presence in the novel.

In *Visions of Cody* Kerouac is finally able to achieve the form of spontaneous ecstasy in the doing of the prose itself, as opposed to the representation of "spontaneous doings" that characterized *On the Road*. The sketches that Kerouac is able to generate in *Visions of Cody* are, as Hunt argues, "performances, not comments on performances" (*Crooked* 181). Like other so-called postmodern novelists, Kerouac writes about writing, and the genesis of *Visions of Cody* out of the material of *On the Road* situates Kerouac in the vanguard of the literary shift from the modern into that of the postmodern. In her article, "'You're putting me on': Jack Kerouac and the Postmodern Emergence," Ronna Johnson articulates the importance of Kerouac as a genealogical figure of this transition in U.S. arts and culture. She argues that "Kerouac's work clarifies the postmodern cusp.... While his liminality—his position between modernism and the postmodern, partaking of both—can be seen as an adaptation of his post-Bomb moment, it is also arguable that his idiosyncratic literature helped to define and clarify a transitional moment there for him to fill" (38). Indeed, the importance of the postwar era and its relationship to the emergence of postmodern performance is not overstated.

In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-Francois Lyotard notes that "The decline of narrative can be seen as an effect of the blossoming of techniques and technologies since the Second World War, which has shifted from the ends of action to its means" (37). For Kerouac this shift meant an abandonment of his

picaresque narrative, as well as an eventual letting go of his hero subject. These ends are eclipsed by means of his ephemeral prose, a realization that he will never fully capture the “pearl” that he so strives for in *On the Road*. In *Visions of Cody* he realizes that “It no longer makes me cry and die and tear myself ... because everything goes away from me like that now—girls, visions, anything, just in the same way and forever and I accept lostness forever” (33). By switching his attention to the articulation of the lost subject by means of his writing method, Kerouac deserts what Lyotard calls the modern “grand narrative.” According to Lyotard, the modern grand narrative is “such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, [or] the emancipation of the rational or working subject” (xxiii). But this is not to say that the postmodern is completely divorced from modern tenets, and Lyotard suggests why Kerouac can be seen as a genealogical figure between the two artistic approaches. He notes that the postmodern “is undoubtedly a part of the modern. All that has been received, if only yesterday ... must be suspected.... Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant” (79). *Visions of Cody*, like that of the postmodern, articulates a work in progress, not a finished one. The nascent quality of Kerouac’s novel can be further understood by means of the author’s approach to performative writing by means of post-literacy, as well as its approach to live presence.

In his often-cited *Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong provides a historical survey on the subject, showing how cultures have moved from orality to literacy, to what he calls a secondary orality. According to Ong this secondary orality is “of present-day high-technology culture, in which a new orality is sustained by ... electronic devices that depend for their existence and functioning on writing and print” (11). In an age of

secondary orality, or post-literacy, authors try to maintain the effects of oral learning in the form of the printed word, which itself has always been a form of technology. Combined with new technologies historically situated in a given age, authors seek to transform traditional literacy to include the improvisatory and communal nature of oral cultures. In *Visions of Cody*, Kerouac seeks to present such a hybridity in his text, specifically utilizing postwar technologies such as the tape recorder to help him produce his spontaneous approach to language. This is a genealogical imperative of many avant-garde experiments, carefully planning a means to capture the unplanned spontaneity of oral language. According to Ong, “Avantgarde literature is now obliged to deplot its narratives or to obscure their plots. But deplotted stories of the electronic age are not episodic narratives. They are impressionistic and imagistic variations on the plotted stories that preceded them” (148). This is precisely the function of *Visions of Cody*, as its impressionistic performance materializes out of the substance of *On the Road*.

Noting this, Hunt argues that the “book is (finally) an attempt to write *about* the oral, an attempt to represent the performative, an attempt by Kerouac and his narrator to comprehend and assess it” (Preface xxiv). It is an assessment fueled by the technologies of his age, including film and sound recording technologies that he specifically draws upon in the novel. Gregory Ulmer asserts the genealogical function of technology and writing when he states, “Writing as technology is a memory machine, with each apparatus finding different means to collect, store, and retrieve information outside of any one individual” (*Heuretics* 16). The electronic apparatus does not mean that it comes after literacy; rather it acts as a conduit so that both the oral and the written can be combined, the effect that Roach defines as orature. Echoing Ong, Ulmer notes, “The

recent insistence in discourse analysis on the interdependence of orality and literacy is one of the symptoms of the emergence of a new apparatus that includes a technology capable of writing orally” (*Teletheory* 94). Kerouac writes in the memory machine of his age, an age that represents an important shift in the history of mediated performance.

In his book *Liveness*, which seeks to refute Peggy Phelan’s assertion that the ontological value of performance can only be found in the present, Phillip Auslander makes the point that “whatever distinction we may have supposed there to be between live and mediatized events is collapsing because live events are becoming more and more identical with mediatized ones” (32). Drawing subject materials from music and television, Auslander documents how new technologies begin by taking their cue from live forms of performance and how these live forms of performance are eventually usurped by trying to replicate these same technologies. The author draws upon theatre and television within postwar culture specifically, arguing that “since the later 1940s, live theatre has become more and more like television and other mediatized cultural forms. To the extent that live performances now emulate mediatized representations, they have become second-hand recreations of themselves through mediatization” (158).

As the debate relates to post-literacy, both sides of the argument present epistemological strengths and weaknesses. For one, Phelan’s stance is too essentialist, as it completely discounts successful literary attempts to capture the presence and community of orality. But often times these experiments do fail, and literary expression is often times antithetical to authentic live ontology. Auslander consistently casts his lot with mediatized forms of performance, especially in his discussion regarding the historicity of music and television. The author avoids any sustained discussion of his

conception of liveness in relation to literacy as a result, which is problematic in that it was the written word that would be held up as the first form of technology to try to usurp the spoken tradition. But even more problematically, Auslander counters Phelan's binary with his own, such as in his argument that live forms of performance have become "second-hand" in relation to other forms of performance. Such binaries ignore the fact that neither literacy nor technology will ever be completely divorced from live ontology, the voice and body included. Both the live and the mediated, the spoken and the written, have and will continue to experiment with one another over time. It is precisely because of these issues that *Visions of Cody* represents such an important literary and cultural experiment.

The novel is a series of attempts made by Kerouac to incorporate post-literacy and the nature of liveness into the medium of his writing method. It is a novel also served by postwar technology, which Kerouac utilizes to illustrate the transformative effect being felt, both positive and negative, by the postwar populace. As it relates to the form of his writing method itself, *Visions of Cody* is Kerouac's most experimental novel, which is illustrated by the novel's "Chapter" contents.

Chapter One is a series of separate sketches, seemingly disconnected from the rest, that produce a montage effect for the reader produced by Kerouac's autobiographical narrator, Jack Duluoz, in and around New York City. As a narrative base line Kerouac provides that "IN THE AUTUMN OF 1951 I began thinking of Cody Pomeray, thinking of Cody Pomeray" (*Visions of Cody* 5). But the sketches in this Chapter only loosely revolve around Cody himself, producing instead a frenetic rush of activity pertaining to the narrator's impressions of America, to which Kerouac dedicated

the novel, adding, “whatever that is.” After writing a letter to Cody to announce his decision to come to California to conclude Chapter One, Kerouac switches to the third person to detail Cody’s history and upbringing among the bums and hustlers in Denver. He then switches back into his first person account of preparation and travels towards California. He self-reflexively contemplates his approach to writing throughout, deciding that his writing can’t keep up with the energy of his mind or his hero subject. He admits “(I can’t think fast enough) (*do* need a recorder, *will* buy one at once ... though I might be nervous on the mike and even tell too much)” (*Visions of Cody* 99).

It is this impetus which brings the reader to Chapter Three, titled “Frisco: The Tape.” Kerouac provides no literary set-up and the Chapter itself is a massive transcription of tape recordings between Jack and Cody, with others sporadically joining the party, over five nights when Duluoiz finally joins Pomeray in his California home. It is Kerouac’s most experimental attempt at form in the novel, an experiment placed in the middle of the action to capture the essence of Cody without the literary interference of a narrator. Here, Cody speaks for himself, and Kerouac provides the transcription as a means of capturing the real-time quality of the two men’s conversations.

This Chapter is followed by “Imitation of the Tape,” a parodic series of attempts to go beyond the limitation of the taped section into what turns into a dizzying derangement of the story and the writer’s voice. It is what he calls a “goof,” and he writes “YOU’VE GOT TO MAKE UP YOUR GODDAMN MIND IF YOU WANT TO GOOF OR DON’T WANT TO GOOF OR WANT TO STAY ON ONE LEVEL KICK OR GOOF” (*Visions of Cody* 255). The goof spirals out of any conscientious authorial

direction at times, and in this sense, it is the section that most resembles the automatic writing produced by the Surrealists and the avant-garde tradition that Kerouac is a part of.

In the final section, entitled “Joan Rawshanks in the Fog,” Kerouac explores the reality of narrative form again while standing as an observer on a film set for a Joan Crawford vehicle. He later switches the focus back to Cody, building up to his bodily meditation on Cody and the Three Stooges. He breaks off in several directions again, before finally reproducing some of the same travel adventure narrative that first appeared in *On the Road* to conclude the novel. Within the novel certain sections push the experimental boundaries of post-literacy and ontology further than others. This chapter focuses on the final three sections to illustrate the issues of performative writing that I raise here.

“It’s a kind of story?”

“Frisco: The Tape” is a 128-page edited transcription of conversations between Kerouac and Cassady over five nights in California. At the time of its recording, Kerouac was staying with the Cassady’s while Neal was working on his autobiography, *The First Third*. Periodically, Kerouac helped Cassady on the manuscript, and narrative form was very much on both of their minds. We see this from the outset of the taped Chapter, as it begins: “**JACK.** — and during the night he said ‘I’m an artist!’ **CODY.** Oh no! he he ha ha ha, he did huh?” (*Visions of Cody* 119). The choice is not an arbitrary one, as Kerouac positions the section and its use of the tape recorder as a meditation on literary form, the pallet from which Kerouac considered himself an artist working.

An overview of the taped Chapter reveals Kerouac's insistence on including it because of his postmodern turn towards revealing the nascent quality of his fiction. On the first night both Jack and Cody are high on marijuana, and Jack probes Cody to tell him stories about staying with Old Bull (William Burroughs) in Texas. For the most part, the section finds Cody back in his whirlwinds as a great talker, but eventually both men become aware of themselves as performing for the tape. Cody admits: "**CODY.** Yeah. Well I'll tell you man, the interesting thing about this stuff is I think the both of us are going around containing ourselves, you know what I mean, what I'm saying is, ah, we're still aware of ourselves, even when we're high **JACK.** Well I feel like an old fool" (*Visions of Cody* 128-9). On the second night Jack has already transcribed the first night's conversation, and both men discuss the effect of the recording process. Theodo notes of this section that it highlights "another instance of Kerouac's postmodern practice of writing about writing" (82). The third night reveals a central irony of the two men's relationship, as Duluo spontaneously composes with the help of a flute, urging Pomeray not to get so hung up with the writing process. This lesson occurs while he records Pomeray to help himself incorporate Cody's orality into his own literary work. Both men always wanted what seemed so easy for the other one to have, Kerouac's prowess as a writer, and Cassady's ability as a speaker. On their fourth night Cody addresses the complexity of the writing process for himself: "**CODY.** So I sat down, I said, ah, 'Cody Pomeray was born on February eight, ah, 'twenty-six, ah, well?...' couldn't get past that and from that day until four years later I never write another word, 'cause I realized I couldn't—it never *occurred* to me the problems of the writer...." (*Visions of Cody* 219). The Chapter itself addresses one central problem that Kerouac was working on: how to

incorporate orature as a form of post-literacy and Cody's liveness into the literary form of the novel. On the fifth and final night Kerouac concludes the tape section with a transcription from the radio of a black preacher issuing a call and response sermon with the congregation that serves as a transition into his "Imitation of the Tape."

By utilizing the tape recorder, Kerouac composes a type of literary formlessness. He tries instead to capture the give-and-take of spontaneous conversation as the novel finds its form as it is happening, not beforehand. Drawing upon the tape recorder as a mediatized conduit, Theodo observes that "Duluoz is announcing the form of the book itself, even though he is writing as it develops. In this sense, at least, the book is one of the most interesting experiments in American literature" (80). Two factors fuel this interest within the tape section: the first being the introduction of the tape recorder itself, and the second being the relationship of Neal Cassady to oral communication.

Magnetic recording was first demonstrated to be a new effective invention in 1898, but it wasn't until the 1940s that because of its low cost and mass production capabilities, the tape recorder came into its own (Camras 1, 11). For the American public it was for all intents and purposes a postwar invention, a radical transformative opportunity for people to record, playback, and save the human voice. For authors like Kerouac it was a chance to revolutionize the word. In *Breathless*, Allen Weiss notes:

The effects of sound recording on writing were manifold: it would effect a hybridization of oral and written cultures; it would increase the content of the archive; it would objectify the voice ... it would establish the voice itself as repeatable and manipulative ... and it would emphasize the eventfulness of the word, thus decreasing the distance between writing and performance, consequently establishing new modes of narration and theatricality. (17-18)

Here, for the first time, Kerouac was able to capture the voice of his hero subject without his own literary intervention. The recorder thus helped him realize that the human voice, that part of human ontology that he was trying to assimilate into his spontaneous prose narration, could be incorporated into his archive on Cassady. It also helped him to realize a new representative quality of Cassady's eccentric story-telling, performances that were strongly based upon his links with oral culture.

Much of Neal Cassady mythology was built upon his ability to talk, his memory and his ability to carry on multiple lines of thought at once within one conversation. It was this ability that prompted Kerouac to make him his alter-ego and it was for this same reason that Cassady later became a counter-culture hero for Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters. Cassady had a relationship to language that resided primarily in the oral tradition, a tradition that inspired the authors that he continually spoke with to try to capture on the page. According to Ong, "Oral memory works effectively with 'heavy' characters, persons whose deeds are monumental, memorable and commonly public" (69). Kerouac's tape section is a further attempt to memorialize Cassady's oral prowess, a prowess that proves to be complicated once it is transferred in the form of orature in the novel.

"Frisco: The Tape" is for the most part a difficult read. This difficulty resonates because Kerouac is dedicated to preserving the authenticity of the conversation. The transcription is meticulous, and he documents all of the usual stoppages and circularity of conversation, including the litter of verbal fillers and nonverbal ticks. The Chapter is further alienating because it reads as an inside joke. The reading audience is cast as a fly on the wall, but an uninitiated reader would easily be lost in the citation of people and

places that the two men talk about. Despite these problems, Ginsberg argues that “The halts, switches, emptiness, quixotic chatters disconnection, meaninglessness, occasional summary piths, all are a ‘slice of life’.... [Kerouac] placed that in the center of his book as an actual sample of the Reality he was otherwise Rhapsodizing” (409-10). The historiographical citation of the rhapsode is a telling one, as many scholars including Ong have referenced the historical importance of these ancient Greek wandering poet-performers and their role in the transition from orality to literacy. In his book *Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle*, Richard Enos summarizes that despite their start as oral story tellers, “During the sixth century B.C., the rhapsodes developed written compositional techniques to preserve by script the collection of Homeric words and grammar which was becoming increasingly rare” (9). Rhapsodes were both the source and the composers of early compositional techniques that evolved out of their oral tradition. Likewise, Kerouac uses his conversations with Cassady to model a new form of prose narration. He is both author and audience, a performance that is further complicated by the introduction of the tape itself.

According to Auslander, “the very presence of the microphone and the performers’ manipulation of it are paradoxical markers of the performance’s status as live and im-mediate” (53). By the time the tape section makes its way to the reader, it has already gone through at least two different performance processes: the live conversation itself and its recording, then its transcription and transformation into literal print. The duality of this process is illustrative of Schechner’s definition of performance as a form of restored behavior. In the restoration of behavior, Schechner articulates that “Elements that are ‘not me’ become ‘me’ without losing their ‘not me-ness’.... While performing, a

performer experiences his own self not directly but through the medium of experiencing the others” (*Between* 111-2). Cody and Jack are not only performing for one another, but for the tape recorder as well, a mediatized form of performance that Kerouac openly shows his manipulation of.

Kerouac admits in the transcription: “**JACK.** I know that bar. **CODY.** Yeah, and so we sat—well that bar also has a lot of other happenings and meaning to me which I won’t go into now, I mean ‘cause they’re more a—ah, different type of thing, but at any rate— **JACK.** I got unconnectedly drunk in there one time (*a lie*)” (*Visions of Cody* 217-8). In the restoration of his behavior in the novel, Kerouac confesses that he lies to Cody to keep him talking while the tape is rolling, providing more source material for Kerouac’s book. According to Ong, “where primary orality promotes spontaneity because the analytic reflectiveness implemented by writing is unavailable, secondary orality promotes spontaneity because through analytic reflection we have decided that spontaneity is a good thing. We plan our happenings carefully to be sure that they are thoroughly spontaneous” (134). The problem for Kerouac in the tape section was to be able to find a way where he could plan and manipulate his and Neal’s conversations to be spontaneous, this while both men are overtly aware of the evaluative presence of the tape recorder.

As the tape section eventually shows, Neal Cassady as Cody Pomeray is not the Dean Moriarty of *On the Road*. He is constantly caught up with work and family duties, a domesticated and tranquilized version of his former self and its mythos. Cody has given in to time; his inability to explain what “IT” is has now multiplied by an inability to express himself at all. Cody stutters over the tape, “I can’t write it, I can’t say, I can’t ah,

you know, I mean, I'm—I can't get anything personally done...." (*Visions of Cody* 129). The tape reveals that Cody is a lost subject, that the modernist hero has been shelved in memory for both Kerouac and his readers. Accessing the taped section, Hunt argues that finally "there is no absolute and final Cody for Duluoz to know.... There is only Cody as Duluoz is able to 'vision' him" (*Crooked* 223). The tape section accentuates the futility of capturing the human subject as an act of preservation. Phelan remarks that "The disappearance of the object is fundamental to performance; it rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered" (*Unmarked* 147). Kerouac's meticulous transcription of his and Neal's conversations is one in a series of competing approaches to memory, the longing to be able successfully to document their *communitas*. It is an attempt at authentic representation of the two men's lives, one that generally fails to capture the immediacy of the relationship as it is transferred to the printed page.

There are flashes of success in the Chapter where both Duluoz and Pomeray seem to achieve a temporary respite from the presence of the tape recorder. The third night, in particular, where Jack and Cody spontaneously compose with the accompaniment of a flute, provides performative insight into the achievement of Kerouac's spontaneous prose to lose time. Recording:

JACK. Chapter one (flutes on piccolo)...First sentence of the book (reads) I TAKE MY FRIENDS TOO SERIOUSLY **CODY.** Great, great, great **JACK.** Why, why, why is it so great? **CODY.** Man, that's just the kind of a tone of a book that I'm trying to write man, that's the tone, you got the tone right there **JACK.** (flutes) Awright. Second sentence. (reads) EITHER THAT OR I DON'T LIKE LIFE ANY MORE **CODY.** Man!... that's what I'M trying to write, it's what I'M thinkin about, exactly right **JACK.** Well I think like this all the time but I never write this **CODY.** Man ... that's the way to write.... **JACK.** But instead of getting hungup there you notice I went on playin the flute.... **CODY.**

(laughs) That's good, boy, that's damn good. (Jack flutes) Very good.
Geez if you could write like that ... for a thousand pages (flute) **JACK**.
Yeah, well it's not a story. (flutes) It's a kind of story? (*Visions of Cody*
151-3)

Spontaneously composed, the section may not be a traditional story, but it's not not a story as well. Instead it is a performative moment about where both Jack and Cody are able to achieve an authentic moment of now between them and the tape recorder. According to Schechner, "While performing.... restored behavior is simultaneously private and social.... During performance, if everything goes right, the experience is of synchronicity as the flow of ordinary time and the flow of performance time meet and eclipse one another" (*Between* 111-13). Despite the presence of the public in the form of the tape recorder, both Jack and Cody are able to achieve a flash of spontaneous ecstasy as their private meditations on the writing process go on display. Not surprisingly, it is the assistance of music, this time as represented by the flute rather than jazz, that helps the twosome achieve a synchronic flow of time. Ong notes, "Sound exists only when it is going out of existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent, and it is sensed as evanescent" (32). Like the sound of his piccolo Jack's words are also evanescent, his point to Cody and to his public is not to get "hungup" on the printed words themselves, but to be honest to the moment in which they reside.

But this section represents the exception and not the general rule of the taped Chapter itself. More commonly, these temporary moments of success are overshadowed by the general failure of the Chapter to convey the ontology of live performance that Kerouac was trying to capture in his literary experiment. Despite the meticulous nature of the transcripts, both Cody and Jack recognize that the taped transcripts are ultimately subjective. Reading from an earlier night's transcript, Cody states:

I'm going through the process of telling *you*, and you're the one who *wrote* it down, see, so I'm saying, you know, you know more about it than I do-- **JACK**. I didn't punctuate it **CODY**. No, you know more about it than I do ... no-well, it *was* unpunctuated talk anyhow.... you know. We've got to break loose *out* of that man (*meaning recorder*) (Visions of Cody 146-7)

Despite not punctuating Cody's talk, the passage shows that even the transcription is open to debate as to what it actually describes. According to Phelan, "To attempt to write about the undocumentable event of performance is to invoke the rules of the written document and thereby alter the event itself" (*Unmarked* 148). Phelan's point is that to achieve a demonstrable qualitative picture of the performance event, writers must be able to achieve a form of writing that goes beyond mere description. Writers must achieve a form of "disappearance" to capture the ephemerality of their subjects, rather than trying to preserve them through verisimilitude (148). To this end Kerouac begins to write towards performative disappearance in the way he concludes his recorded Chapter, providing the set up for his archive to perform the ephemerality of his memory and his hero subject.

Kerouac concludes the taped Chapter with the broadcast of a "COLORED REVIVAL MEETING ON RADIO" after the participants have left the room (*Visions of Cody* 246). It is a fitting choice made by the author, as it is sound and not print that anticipates the next Chapter entitled "Imitation of the Tape." Ong argues that "Print encourages a sense of closure, a sense that what is found in a text has been finalized, has reached a state of completion" (129). The call-and-response sermon coming from the radio, an orality signifying the secondary orality of mechanical reproduction, works much differently. For one, the genre of the call-and-response asks specifically to be answered, to be continued via participation. Kerouac is setting up why he needs to answer the

limitations of his taped Chapter because he recognizes that it relies too heavily on writing towards preservation. From the radio sermon:

PREACHER. AFTER AWHILE THEY KEPT UP ON PRAYIN....
PEOPLE. AFTER AWHILE!!.... **PREACHER.** I WALK IN THERE --
PEOPLE. I WALK IN THERE!...**PREACHER.** AFTER AWHILE HE
TOLD HIM!!.... **PEOPLE.** YES!! **PREACHER.** I HEEERD – I
HEEEEEEEEEEEERD – I HEERD A MAN MAY DO WORKS **PEOPLE.**
MOTHER! MOTHER! **PREACHER.** I GOT MY SURANCE...I
HEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEERD! (*Visions of Cody* 246-7)

Hearing becomes a metonymic impetus for Kerouac's writing response, as he too must "walk in there" to "do works." Another point of difference from the finalizability of print that this moment of orature signifies is the collapse of objective distance between author and subject. Hunt posits that "The transcript of the revival meeting suggests that the 'I' of the Spontaneous Prose writer can express himself with the logic of a single performance while at the same time admitting and preserving his multiplicity and freedom to evolve" (*Crooked* 225). In "Imitation of the Tape," Kerouac returns to his own multivocal interpretive voice, signaling his departure from the verisimilitude of the taped section. Phelan argues, "The act of writing toward disappearance, rather than the act of writing toward preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself" (*Unmarked* 148). After disappearing from the conclusion of "Frisco: The Tape," it is precisely the position of subjectivity we find the narrator inhabiting.

"But no, wait in here, don't you know I'm serious?"

Whereas the tape section represents an official, conscious approach to memory, "Imitation of the Tape" achieves quite the opposite. It is Kerouac's counter memory of what came before, a running interior monologue of his unconsciousness and its

relationship to Cody and writing. Here, Kerouac turns to performative writing to parody what has already been said, recorded and transcribed, providing yet another chain of the performance event itself. It is, as David Sterritt aptly puts it, “observation and manipulation of restored behavior with a vengeance” (*Mad* 139). But unlike the section that came before, “Imitation” finds its voice in parodic, rather than realistic, self-doubling. The section is exemplary of what Pollock calls the “citational” function of performative writing. Of this function she writes: “Citational writing figures writing as rewriting, as the repetition of given discursive forms that are exceeded in the ‘double time’ of performing writing and thereby expose the fragility of identity, history, and culture constituted in rites of textual recurrence” (92). To dispel the textual form that came before, Kerouac’s “Imitation” utilizes automatic writing to perform his own subjective agency, providing the mirrored reflection of unconsciousness to consciousness.

According to Foucault, “Genealogy is history in the form of a concerted carnival” that provides a parodic modality of history that allows authors to play with, rather than venerate, the masks of identity constituted by official, “monumental” history (94). “Imitation” unravels Kerouac’s long process of holding up Neal Cassady as the modern hero subject. It provides instead a wickedly surreal series of masks that dissolve into the subjectivity of writing itself. Kerouac begins the section:

COMPOSITION.....by Jackie Duluo.....6-B “Now up yonder in Suskahooty,” said Dead Eye Dick – no, I exaggerate, his name was Black Dan – “up yonder in Saskahoty,” said Dead Eye Dick Black Dan ... I’m gonna go to Charleston, West Virginia Saturday night, or jump in the river, *one*.” But no, wait in here, don’t you know I’m serious? You think I’m? – damn you, you made, you make, the most, m – I guess – but now wait a minute, till I ... I meant to say, w – about whatever –well, I swear, I swow.... English almost wasn’t it? – hee hee hee....(*Visions* 249-50)

Kerouac's introduction serves as performative play, providing a multitude of voices that are representative of, in various degrees, the narrator, Cody, and the traditional Western novel. According to Henry Bial, in performance theory, "play is understood as the force of uncertainty which counter-balances the structure provided by ritual. Where ritual depends on repetition, play stresses innovation and creativity" (115). Despite the imitation's role as another chain of repeated behavior, it is best understood as a counter-memory because unlike the taped section, Kerouac allows himself free reign. For him, this automatism is an earnest experiment, "don't you know I'm serious?" even though he recognizes that it tends to lose grasp of the book's material and language, "English almost wasn't it?"

Throughout his "Imitation" Kerouac deliberately shows the halts and switches of oral language that arise out of his unconscious associations. From an "introductory speech" he lists topics such as "1. Definite Depth 2. Cattishness 3. Sitting on a stool 4. Loves to Sing 5. A woman, a woman 6. Handy hands 7. Fainting Desdemona of the Andes 8. Twirling Barrett from Wimpole Street 9. Her musicians say Motherfucka, fuck-a.... even editors of great publishing houses listen" (*Visions of Cody* 250-1). It is again an attempt to document by means of post-literacy, although Kerouac allows himself to speak much more freely than when he was only able to report the conversations from the earlier section. According to Ong, "Talk implements conscious life but it wells up into consciousness out of unconscious depths.... Writing or script differs as such from speech in that it does not inevitably well up out of the unconscious. The process of putting spoken language into writing is governed by consciously contrived, articulate rules" (81). In effect, Kerouac tries to break the rules of writerly form by privileging his

own subjective and rambling mental associations. Shortly after the “introductory speech,” he asserts, “But, ah, not to get hung-up, man now you’re to listen to *me* now, and let *me* tell the story – see? (*Visions of Cody* 251). By focusing on free association in the form of automatism, “Imitation” abandons Cody as a definitive subject. At this point in the novel the section represents more of an experiment in language than any articulation of plot development. It is, at this point, a game based on chance rather than horizontal narrative.

Not surprisingly, it is precisely because of this that early readers like Ginsberg at first rejected the novel. After first reading it, he wrote to Kerouac, “The totally surrealistic sections (blowing on sounds and refusing to make sense) (in section following tape records) is just a hangup, hangup” (*Letters* 1940 373). But despite his complaints, Ginsberg was at least partially inspired, as he goes on for a page and a half imitating Kerouac’s language games. He admonishes, then parodies, “you gotta make sense you gotta muk sense, jub, jack, fik, anyone can bup it.... It is ACTION WHICH IS DEMANDED AT THIS TIME. That’s what he sez, though god know what kind of action he talking about” (*Letters* 1940 374).

If there is an action that best describes “Imitation” it is Kerouac’s own description that the section is a “GOOF.” Kerouac moves in and out of representative subjects, rendering them incomplete rather than whole. Before admonishing himself “TO MAKE UP YOUR GODDAMN MIND IF YOU WANT TO GOOF” Kerouac begins the sketch:

LADY GODIVA. (*clad*) They knocked me out on a stone of hemp the other – AT THIS POINT IN HIS DREAM DULUOZ WOKE UP and recall – though admitting the blue bluer of that – Duluoz woke, recalled that he hadn’t seen his father for the longest of times and that possibly he must be dead just as real as death. ‘Well then,’ he thought, leaning on the boxcar down the edges of which ran the stain of his sperm, ‘if I’m to be

bat-eyed in the night for no other reason' – or in whichever way he must, then have phrased his thoughts, being nineteen ears or years (no corn) old and.... Well, you see, I hung myself up. DuluoZ....(*Visions of Cody* 253).

Kerouac drops representations and voices almost as quickly as he brings them up. Noting the metonymic function of performative writing, Pollock offers that “It dramatizes the limits of language, sometimes as an endgame, sometimes as the pleasures of playing ... in an endlessly open field of representation.... effectively making absent what mimetic/metaphoric uses of language attempt to make present” (83). Tapping into his unconsciousness via automatic writing, Kerouac goofs on anything from Lady Godiva, sounds, cavemen, and his father’s newspaper column from when he was growing up. Unlike the dictum of his own “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose,” there is no definitive image object.

Kerouac searches for purpose, stating:

(Humph); but enough, let us sleep now, let us ascertain, in the morning, if there is a way of abstracting the interesting paragraphs of material in all this running consciousness stream that can be used as the progressing lightning chapters of a great essay account the wonders of the world as it continually flashes up in retrospect; as, for example, this night I ran cold water into a glass at the sink while everybody was high and immediately was reminded completely and perfectly of the cool exact waters of Pine Brook on a summer afternoon. (*Visions of Cody* 258)

Kerouac’s mind rushes like a stream, but it neglects the “jewel-center” which he describes in “Essentials” as a “river rock” (70). Momentum is thus hard to maintain, and Kerouac admits to his own self-doubt in trying to transition as a writer:

So now I sit and stew in a sophistication which has taken hold of me just exactly like a disease and makes me lie around like a bum all day long and stay up all night goofing with myself.... I wonder what working people think of me when they hear my typewriter clacking in the middle of the night or what they think I’m up to when I take walks at 2 a.m. in outlying suburban neighborhoods – the truth is I haven’t a single thing to wr – feel

foolish.... I feel as though everything *used* to be alright; and now everything is automatically – bad. (*Visions of Cody* 259-60)

Kerouac admits his own nostalgia for the way he used to be able to write; the problem is that once he has committed himself to establishing a new literary form, his Pandora's box cannot be closed. Regina Weinreich argues of the "Imitation" that "The narrative is so absorbed in the philosophy of writing.... there is no way of 'abstracting the interesting paragraphs.' The preoccupation with writing itself prevents Kerouac from achieving completely his cherished aim" (84). The failure of Kerouac's automatism as a novelistic discourse is that it replaces one extreme spectrum (mimetic presence) of the pendulum with another (representative absence). Like a person hovering over a pinball machine and pounding at its sides, Kerouac bangs on the game of literary form until the game goes full tilt.

Kerouac is of course aware of the problem, and he even playfully echoes the common complaint charged against the automatic tradition when writing, "the only thing is you've got to explain yourself clearly or not at all" (*Visions of Cody* 271). Despite its problems, "Imitation" is still an important genealogical step for Kerouac because it allows him to step out of verisimilitude and the modernistic tradition from which he was trying to break. Giamo writes of the "Imitation" that "The eccentricities of the free, random style in this brief part make "The Tape" seem like a stuffy panel discussion at an annual academic conference. In this sense, like all art, it is an improvement on life" (50). In the last part of *Visions of Cody* entitled "Joan Rawshanks in the Fog," Kerouac continues this improvement as he is able to balance the voices of "The Tape" and its "Imitation" through the discovery and application of his spontaneous prose method itself.

"JOAN RAWSHANKS STANDS ALL ALONE in the fog."

“Joan Rawshanks in the Fog” is the last section of *Visions of Cody* and its title comes from a Hollywood movie scene that Kerouac stumbled upon while living with the Cassady’s in San Francisco. The film is *Sudden Fear* (1952) starring Joan Crawford, and Kerouac describes the “impulsive, organic spectacle” that shuts down the neighborhood and causes him and others to participate (*Visions of Cody* 280). There is no formal separation from the sketch and the novel’s conclusion, and Kerouac uses the sketch to implicate the “reality” of traditional narrative form. “Joan Rawshanks in the Fog” is the sketch’s “jewel center” and the resulting prose is one of the first extended examples of Kerouac’s writing method of spontaneity. The author begins, “JOAN RAWSHANKS STANDS ALL ALONE in the fog. Her name is Joan Rawshanks and she knows it, just as anybody knows his name, and she knows who she is, same way, Joan Rawshanks stands alone in the fog and a thousand eyes are fixed on her in all kinds of ways” (*Visions of Cody* 275). Kerouac goes on to describe the multitude of ways in which Joan Crawford is being viewed--everyone from the director, cops, technicians, and local neighborhood citizens surrounding the scene. Kerouac’s point is to strip the filmed sequence of its illusion, its attempt to fictionalize the performance as if it were happening for the first time.

The filmed sequence is a short one, where Joan is instructed to run to a door and act terrified while running from someone. Kerouac’s narrator sees her do this again and again, the scene’s repetition only reinforcing its unreality. In a similar light Walter Benjamin raised the same objections against film in his well-known essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” According to Benjamin “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and

space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.... The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity” (220). Copying art robs it of its “aura.” According to him, aura is “the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be” like “a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch” (222-3). Aura, when repeatedly run smooth by its consumption by the masses, produces a pastiche representation of the artwork itself. Summarizing Benjamin, Peters notes, “Though the form of the work can be doubled, its unique history cannot. Not in glorious and ubiquitous reproduction but in local imperfection lies the proof of authenticity.... Mortality and historicity take on a new status as the homeland of truth” (238). In “Joan Rawshanks” Kerouac serves as a historiographer as he mines the historical truth of the moment, his wide-ranging perspective tries to unveil everything that the finished film tries to hide.

As it relates to the issue of liveness in performance, Phelan argues that “To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology” (*Unmarked* 146). For Phelan, authentic live performance is marked by its loss, as once it begins it disappears. Mediated forms of performance such as film strip the performance of its aura by reproducing it to the point where it loses its uniqueness, its authenticity as a mortal and ephemeral object. But in the record of “Joan Rawshanks” Kerouac’s main complaint is not that the film is inauthentic, it’s that it tries to hide its inauthenticity. This is something he tries to resolve in his work by putting it on display:

Joan Rawshanks, wearing a mink coat, is trying to adjust herself to the act of crying but has a thousand eyes of local Russian Hill spectators who’ve

been hearing about the Hollywood crew filming for the last hour, ever since dinner's end, and are arriving on the scene here despite the fog (move over from my microphone wire, there) in driblets; pretty girls with fresh dew fog faces and bandanas and moonlit (though no moon) lips...the fog of San Francisco in the night, as a buoy in the bay goes b-o, as a buoy in the bag goes b-o, bab-o, as a buoy in the bag goes bab-o....(*Visions of Cody* 276)

Unlike the makers of the film, Kerouac knows that he cannot authentically reproduce exactly what he is watching. Instead, Kerouac allows a myriad of impressions from behind the scenes to enter the "picture" he is creating. This provides what Auslander calls "Authentic inauthenticity, which demands that performers acknowledge and assert their own inauthenticity" (101). This is in part why Kerouac places his "Joan Rawshanks" sketch directly after the two preceding Chapters. It is an attempt to show the reader the diverging paths through which he was trying to perform perception and the competing "visions" of its display.

Today, Hollywood is also revealing its secrets, as DVD and cable television continually provide more programming on the "making of" movies. But this was not the case in Kerouac's postwar culture, and what he sees on the location set is a real lesson to him in the composition of cinematic fiction. There is the dream:

Yes, because when I thought of Hollywood camera crews I always pictured them in the California night ... best of all I thought of them in San Joaquin Valley of California ... and on the road itself Hopalong Cassidy, in his white hat and on his famed pony, loping along intently with beck and bent, holding one rein up daintily, stiffly, like a fist, instead of hanging to the pommel; grave, bemused in the night, thinking thoughts; an escapee; followed by a band of rustlers posing as a posse, they catch up by the moment; the camera truck is leading and rolling them down the slope of a long hill; soon we will see views of a roadside cut, a sudden little crick bridge made of a log or two; then the great moony grove suddenly appearing and disappearing; all pure California night scenery and landscape.... I thought of the camera crew doing this in the soft Southern California night, and of their dinners by campfire later, and talk.

Then there is the reality:

I had never imagined them going through these great Alexandrian strategies just for the sake of photographing Joan Rawshanks fumbling with her keys a goggyfoddy door while all traffic halts in real world life only half a block away and everything wits on a whistle blown by a hysterical fool in a uniform who suddenly decided the importance of what's going on by some convulsive phenomena in the lower regions of his twitching hips, all manifesting itself in a sudden freezing grimace of idiotic wonder just exactly like the look of the favorite ninny in every B-movie you and I and Cody ever saw.... Joan Rawshanks in the fog ... it isn't that Holly wood has won us with its dreams, it has only enhanced our own wild dreams, we the populace so strange and unknown, so uncalculable, mad, eee ... Joan Rawshanks in the fog....(*Visions of Cody* 285-6)

Kerouac shows incredulity towards the dream and its reality, but he also ends with an optimistic sense of unanswerability. Hollywood, as mediated performance, is unable to separate itself from the bodies it depicts and plays to. Instead, it only enhances "our own crazy dreams." Citing the novel's narrator, Hunt argues that "Duluoze refuses to resolve the conflict between performance and product, take and finished film.... The process Duluoze encounters is too indirect, too vast and intricate, to be controlled by a single vision" (*Crooked* 160). Unlike the film itself, Kerouac does not allow himself the use of an editing room, and he casts his lens from long shots to close-ups in between his evocative refrain "Joan Rawshanks in the fog."

He zooms in on Joan herself:

Joan apparently wanted to weep in this scene, the young director dissuaded her; this explains the early head on hands business, she was fixing up to cry, in fact the scene was run off and shot and Joan, weeping, ran up the ramp to the door; nope, the director made her do this over again, substituting for the tears a frightened run from something down into the general driveway of the night so that he has all of us in the fogswept audience fearful already of some new menace to come up from his fantasy.... all the crowd was amazed, little teenage girls took care to notice that the director, absentmindedly explaining to Joan in the wind, swept and held her scarf when she took a drag off a cigarette, the teenage

girls thought this to be extra-special polite to her as Movie Queen but actually I noticed to make his point clear and to do so drawing her head down by the scarf noose around her neck and really make her listen his pithy best instruction; I thought it was just a little on this side of cruel, I feel a twinge or sorriness for Joan, either because all this time she'd been suffering real horrors nevertheless as movie queen that I had no idea about, or, in the general materialism of Hollywood she is being maltreated as a star 'on the way out'; which she certainly is not at this moment (probably is), though of course all the teenage girls were quick to say, in loud voices for everyone to hear, that her makeup was very heavy, she'd practically have to stagger under it, and leaving it up to us to determine how saggy and baggy her face; well, naturally, I didn't expect Joan Crawford in the fog to be anything but Joan Crawford in the fog....(*Visions of Cody* 279)

Due to the spectacle of the movie scene Duloz fluctuates from sympathy to hostility in trying to separate Joan as person and the image of Joan as movie star. Despite her physical presence, Kerouac senses the loss of Joan's aura because she is so obviously performing for the camera, not the physical audience that surrounds her. He urges her to participate with him, much like he might to a jazz musician:

I said to her 'Blow, baby, blow!' when I saw that thousands' eyes were fixed on her and in the huge embarrassment of that, really on a human-like level, or humane, all these people are going to see you muster up a falsehood for money, you'll have to whimper tears you yourself probably never had any intention of using; on some gray morning in your past what was your real tear Joan, your real sorrows....(*Visions of Cody* 281)

Kerouac complains about the loss of genuine human contact, something Benjamin addresses specifically as a consequence of film acting. Noting the difference between stage and film actors, Benjamin suggest that "The camera that presents the performance of the film actor to the public need not respect the performance as an integral whole.... The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera" (228). For both Benjamin and Kerouac then, film acting is in part an "embarrassment" for actors because it dispels their unique relationship to a live audience. According to

Benjamin, “The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the ‘spell of personality,’ the phony spell of a commodity” (231).

Such spell of personality is hauntingly captured in another representation of Joan Crawford by Robert Frank, the photographer whom Kerouac collaborated with on the film *Pull My Daisy* (1959) and for whom he wrote the introduction to the photographic series *The Americans* (1960). The photograph is entitled *Detroit, Michigan, 1955* and it captures a scene of a Detroit movie house promoting the Joan Crawford film *A Woman's Face* (1941) (Greenough 168). The ticket booth is the focus of the composition; its facade is covered by over a dozen Hollywood publicity shots of the film. One shot particularly stands out, a huge picture of Joan Crawford's face in the bottom left hand corner that comes from the film where Joan is holding her hands up in a look of terror, not unlike the same reaction that Kerouac witnessed on the streets in San Francisco. But her fear is contrasted by the seeming perfection of the actress herself. Her hair, eyes, lips, and fingernails all stand out in contrast to the rest of her porcelain skin in the black and white photograph. There is a large banner that reads “Joan Crawford,” the attention made by the owners of the movie theater is centered squarely on the draw that the actress will receive as a commodity. But within the center of the composition, small enough that you may miss it at first, is another face looking back at the camera. It is the woman in charge of the ticket booth herself. She is mired in shadow, her hair and makeup similar to that of the huge blowup that covers her ticket booth. Her glance too is made up of contradiction, as she wears a crescent smile that seems to resign its owner to the smaller place in which she resides while still half enjoying the small moment of “fame” that the snap of the

camera provides. Once seen, the photograph's pathos resonates from this woman's face, not the one so obviously on display. Sterritt notes of the piece that "Hers is the least assertive woman's face on view, but its dead-center position within the frame signals Frank's genuine and compassionate interest—in the woman herself, and in her status as poignant representative of the strange, unknown, "uncalculable" populace of which Kerouac wrote in such ringing Whitmanian terms" (*Mad* 93). It is a stunning moment of voyeur-vú, a return of the glance where the audience of the photograph becomes the camera, both capturing, and being captured. Kerouac concluded his "Introduction to *The Americans*" quite simply, "To Robert Frank I now give this message: You got eyes" (23).

After lamenting the "falsehood" of the actress's performance in "Joan Rawshanks," Kerouac immediately turns his attention to the power of the camera itself. Observing the moment when the camera actually starts churning the narrator reports:

now there's only the great silence of the great moment of Hollywood, the actual TAKE ... just as in a bullfight, when the moment comes for the matador to stick his sword into the bull and kill it, and the matador makes use firmly of this allotted moment, you, the American who never saw a bullfight realize this is what you came to see, the actual kill ... the central kill, the riddled middle idea, the thing, the Take, the actual juice suction of the camera catching a vastly planned action, the moment when we all know that the camera is germinating, a thing is being born whether we planned it right or not; there were three takes of every area of the action; Joan rushing up the drive, then Joan fiddling with her keys at the door, and later a third take...three shots of each, each show carefully forewarned; and the exact actual moment of the Take is when silence falls over just like a bullfight. (*Visions of Cody* 281)

The take is a filmed sequence of a live performance, but by the end of later takes the scene loses its ontological legitimacy for Kerouac. By then, Joan and the film crew have perfected what they want to be seen in the future, and the present moment loses its authenticity as a result. Watching the "vastly planned" take, the narrator observes:

Joan Rawshanks, actually in the fog, but as we can see with our own everyday eyes in the fog all lit by klieg lights, and in a furcoat story now, and not really frightened or anything but the central horror we all feel for her when she turns her grimace of horror on the crowd preparatory to running up the ramp, we've seen that face, ugh, she turns it away herself and rushes on with the scene, for a moment we've all had a pang of disgust, the director however seems pleased: he sucks on his red lollipop. (*Visions of Cody* 282)

Kerouac has always been interested in the timing of narrative fiction. Witnessing the film being made, he realizes that it is the opposite of the moment of "IT" he so righteously upholds. Noting the backdrop of the scene he states:

the technicians ... they're the backbone of Hollywood for the movies have nothing now but great technique to show, a great technique is ready for a great incoming age ... Hollywood so mad, Hollywood, the Death of Hollywood is upon us ... the director will go to all that foolish trouble to move and test a twig and if he wants to cut it he can, as if that would add reality, but he ends up not cutting it, just testing it, this consumes the attention of a thousand eyes and the tickings of moments that cost a company that puts up props by an actual apartment the same amount of money it would cost them to build an actual apartment house itself likely, what will all those union technicians milled and snarling in the background and all them klieg lights and bought cops and made producers and geniuses with lollipops spending their precious time in a rainy Frisco night – Joan Rawshanks in the fog....(*Visions of Cody* 284)

For Hollywood is not interested in producing the truth of "IT" to its audience, each scene or test can be discarded just as easily as it can be kept. Illusion is what matters, an illusion that Kerouac does not care about by the end of the shoot. Supplementing the scene with his own "mad dream" with his last long shot, he concludes:

So long have I been here that the original interest I had found in observing the director, who was not much older than myself, got lost and with it the directors got lost, I couldn't see him anymore, he faded away into something rich and distant, like sitting by swimmingpools on drizzly nights in Beverly Hills in a topcoat, with a drink, to brood. As for poor Joan Rawshanks in the fog, she too was gone...I guess they'd raise a glass of champagne to her lips tonight in some warmly lit room atop the roof of a hilltop hotel roofgarden swank arrangement somewhere in town. At dawn when Joan Rawshanks sees the first hints of great light over

Oakland, and swoops the bird of the desert, the fog will be gone. (*Visions of Cody* 290)

It's illusion that matters, the difference between his and Hollywood's vision is that Kerouac wants to preserve as much of the "fog" as possible. The vision of the camera gets replaced by the visions of Kerouac's own literary lenses, the multiplicity and rivalry of which are put on display here and throughout the novel.

"So supposing the Three Stooges were real..."

After "Joan Rawshanks" Kerouac turns his attention back to Cody for the rest of the novel, stating, "Let's swing a camera down on Cody and catch him hurrying up the ramp like Joan Rawshanks in the fog, but Gad he would outrun the camera! – he would astound the lighting with his furlibues, eye-flutters, show-offs, piper jigs and 'shining eyes' (*Visions of Cody* 321). The focus on Cody's body is telling, as soon after "Joan Rawshanks" Kerouac provides an extended bodily meditation on Cody and the Three Stooges. This section was itself published as a separate piece entitled "Neal and the Three Stooges" in 1957 in *New Editions*, out of Berkeley, California (*Letters* 1957 54). Kerouac critics have argued that the selection represents the apex of the author's use of spontaneous prose in the novel. Giamo, for one, notes that "The sketch—which richly blends burlesque, slapstick, reverie, observations of city districts, biography, personal memories, classical allusions, and God—marks the acme of Kerouac's spontaneous prose in the novel" (51). There is an overarching reason for the success of the sketch, as Kerouac is finally able to achieve a unity between the liveness of his subject and its mediation through the form of his writing. Both corporeality and its imagination are connected without one seemingly winning out over the other.

Pollock argues that “Performative writing is *nervous*.... Rather than skittish in the sense of glancing or superficial (or even merely anxious), ‘nervous’ writing follows the body’s model: it operates by synaptic relay, drawing one charged moment into another, constituting knowledge in an ongoing process of transmission and transferal” (90-1). Kerouac’s vision of Cody and the Stooges acts as a form of this “synaptic relay” where one body is genealogically tied to the social world in which it operates. Kerouac begins the piece:

BUT THE LATEST AND PERFHAPS REALLY, next to Mexico and the jazz tea high ... best vision, also on high, but under entirely different circumstances, was the vision I had of Cody as he showed me one drowsy afternoon in January, on the sidewalks of workaday San Francisco...what and how the Three Stooges are like when they go staggering and knocking each other down the street....(*Visions of Cody* 300)

Jack and Cody are on their way to work, and Kerouac quickly sets up their bodies as direct contrasts to the official and accepted bodies in which they operate. He writes:

We sauntered thus – had come in the green clunker for some reason, wore our usual greasy bum clothes that put real bums to shame but nobody with the power to reprimand and arrest us in his house – began somehow talking about the Three Stooges – were headed to see Mrs. So-and-So in the office and on business and around us conductors, executives, commuters, consumers rushed or sometimes just maybe ambling Russian spies carrying bombs in briefcases and sometimes ragbags I bet ... Nothing only bright California gloom and propriety ... nothing but whiteness and everything busy, official, let’s say Californian, no spitting, no grabbing your balls, you’re at the carven arches of a great white temple of commercial travel in America....(*Visions of Cody* 303)

Like in *On the Road*, it is the vision of whiteness that the twosome must battle. This time, however, the contestation is found within the body itself. It is a body marked by, but resistant to, the label of whiteness, a label that both Cody and Jack reject because of its seeming order and rule-based limitations.

Pollock notes that the nervous function of performative writing follows a genealogical imperative when it casts its lens on the body's function. According to her, "Genealogy writes a body always already written by history. But centered in the body, it also writes that history in breaks and ruptures, not as a text per se but as the story of living bodies always already contesting at both macro- and micro-political levels, the social texts to which they are otherwise indentured" (91). Lamenting the rigidity of the whiteness that he sees, Cody provides its alternative, producing a spontaneous body that mimics the play and critical effect of the Stooges' bodies. After bemoaning America's "whiteness," Kerouac introduces Cody's response:

it came into Cody's head to imitate the stagger of the Stooges, and he did it wild, crazy, yelling in the sidewalk right there by the arches and by hurrying executives, I had a vision of him which at first (manifold it is!) was swamped by the idea that this was one hell of a wild unexpected twist in my suppositions about how he might now in his later years feel, twenty-five, about his employers and their temple and conventions, I saw his (again) rosy flushing face exuding head and joy, his eyes popping in the hard exercise of staggering, his whole frame of clothes capped by those terrible pants with six, seven holes in them and streaked with baby food, come, ice cream, gasoline, ashes – I saw his whole life....(*Visions of Cody* 303-4)

Cody provides the "stooged" body as a rupture in official history, allowing an alternative to even his best friend's "supposition" of what his place in that history may be. His act is exemplary of what Foucault argues of genealogical bodies, where he writes, "We believe ... that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits and holidays; it constructs resistances" (87).

It is the resistant quality of the Stooges' bodies that draws both Jack and Cody towards its kinesthetic imagination. It is an imagination captured succinctly because of its virtual simplicity. As Kerouac puts it:

Supposing the Three Stooges were real? (and so I saw them spring into being at the side of Cody in the street right there front of the Station, Curly Moe and Larry ... Moe the leader, mopish, mowbry, mope-mouthed, mealy, mad, hanking, making the others quake; whacking Curly on the iron pate, backhanding Larry (who wonders).... it gets worse and worse, it started on an innocent thumbing, which led to backhand, then the pastries, then the nose yanks, blab, bloop, going, going, gong; and now as in a sticky dream set in syrup universe they do muckle and moan and pull and mop about like I told you in an underground hell of their own invention, they are involved and alive....(*Visions of Cody* 304)

Despite their kinesthetic artificiality, Kerouac insists on the performative livability of the Stooges. Like his friend Cody, the Stooges are agents of childlike resistance to the repression of the adult world. They represent both sides of the traditional two-sided representation of theatrical performance, displaying bodies that are both comedic and tragic. This resistance is expressed directly through the body's movements, specifically via what the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht called the body's "gest".

According to Brecht, gest "means both gist and gesture" and depending upon how it is formulated "the social gest is the gest relevant to society, the gest that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances" (42, 104-5). In her essay "Diverging Paths in Performance Genealogies," Ruth Laurion Bowman puts gest precisely in terms of its historiographical value, asserting, "Gest ... is a sign of a genealogical moment" (191). Despite the apparent brutality of the Stooges' fight sequence, Kerouac quickly utilizes their gest to align their bodies with the divine. He writes:

Larry, goofhaired, mopple-lipped, lisped, muxed and completely flunk – trips over a pail of whitewash and falls face first on a seven-inch nail that remains imbedded in his eyebone; the eyebone’s connected to the shadowbone, shadowbone’s connected to the luck bone, luck bone’s connected to the, foul bone, foul bone’s connected to the, high bone, high bone’s connected to the air bone, air bone’s connected to the, sky bone, sky bone’s connected to the, angel bone, angel bone’s connected to the, God bone, *God bone’s connected to the bone bone*; Moe yanks it out of his eye, impales him with an eight-foot steel rod....(*Visions of Cody* 304)

The Stooges’ gest is a physical marker representing, in part, the spiritual alternative to the “busy” and “official” bodies Kerouac describes surrounding them. Just as Larry slips over the “whitewash” that surrounds him, so too does Kerouac’s sketch produce an accident of official history that ruptures the “whitewash” he sees surrounding him and Cody. Via the genealogical nature of their bodies’ zeitgeist, the Stooges’ bodies provide another site of Kerouac’s fondness for the “HOLY GOOF” in society, the idiot savant of history.

Unlike “Joan Rawshanks,” whose body seems illusionary because it plays to some future audience, the Stooges seem real because they appear beside him in spontaneous presence. Kerouac’s performative sketch urges his audience to imagine the same, without the assistance of a mediated camera lens. He implores:

So supposing the Three Stooges were real and like Cody and me were going to work, only they forgot about that, and tragically mistaken and interallied, begin pasting and cuffing each other at the employment office desk as clerks stare; supposing in real gray day and not the gray day of movies ... the three Stooges ... are providing scenes for wild vibrating hysterias as great as the hysterias of hipsters at Jazz at the Philharmonics....(*Visions of Cody* 304-5)

Even though he transports the perspective of the Stooges to everyday life, the author also acknowledges that the perspective of the Stooges does come from their mediatization. He shares that:

There was an afternoon when I had found myself hungup in a strange city ... and suddenly the three Stooges appeared (just the name) goofing on the screen and in the streets that are the same streets as outside the theater only they are photographed in Hollywood by serious crews like Joan Rawshanks in the fog....(*Visions of Cody* 305)

Despite the “sameness” between the Stooges and Joan, Kerouac offers one important difference, a difference found again in the gest of the body. As Sterritt puts it, “Kerouac acknowledges them as performers but takes *this* actuality as an ironic counterpoint to their on-screen personas” (*Screening* 39). The author counters:

Then I saw the Three Stooges materialize on the sidewalk, their hair blowing in the wind of things, and Cody was with them, laughing and staggering in savage mimicry of them and himself staggering and gooped ...and the Three Stooges were bopping one another ... until, as Cody says, they’ve been at it for so many years in a thousand climatic efforts superclimbing and worked out every refinement of bopping one another so much that now, in the end, if it isn’t already over, in the baroque period of the Stooges they are finally bopping mechanically and sometimes so hard it’s impossible to bear (wince), but by now they’ve learned not only how to master the style of the blows but the symbol and acceptance of them also, as though inured in their souls...the Stooges don’t feel the blows any more, Moe is iron, Curley’s dead, Larry’s gone, off the rocker....(*Visions of Cody* 305)

By combining the virtuality of the Stooges and the actuality of everyday life, Kerouac articulates that the Stooges gest towards their own metonymic social significance. The Stooges’ “baroque” bodies are both actual and symbolic of agents in society beat, but beatific as a result. This baroque quality is extended to Cody as well, as Kerouac concludes the section:

So then I knew that long ago when the mist was raw Cody saw the Three Stooges, maybe he just stood outside a pawnshop, or hardware store, or in that perennial poolhall door but maybe more likely on the pavings of the city under tragic rainy telephone poles, and thought of the Three Stooges, suddenly realizing – that life is strange and the Three Stooges exist – that in 10,000 years – that ... all the goofs he felt in him were justified in the outside world and he had nothing to reproach himself for, bonk, boing, crash, skittley boom, pow, slam, bang, boom, wham, blam, crack, frap,

kerplunk, clatter, clap, blap, fap, slapmap, splat, crunch, crowsh, bong, splat, spat, BONG! (*Visions of Cody* 305-6)

By taking on the gest of the Stooges, Cody himself is justified as a spontaneous anomaly of the social world, an anomaly that Kerouac tries to justify in the staged body of the writing itself. The section is a highlight of the novel, in part, because Kerouac takes his writing to the same level of the Stooges' bodies he describes. It is a performative which is frantic, nervous, and thoughtful; it strains bodies and asks the audience to be strained, producing a performance that is like a sporting event, participatory and revelatory. It fulfills one of the most important directives of what performance should do according to Brecht, namely that it is "fun" (6).

"I made a supplication in this dream."

Immediately after arguing the significance of Cody and the Stooges' play, Kerouac provides its refutation in the form of a quote from T.S. Eliot. He cites, "OBVIOUSLY, AN IMAGE which is immediately and unintentionally ridiculous is merely a fancy.' – T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays, 1917-1932*" (*Visions of Cody* 306). The Stooges, Cody, and his own writing methodology may indeed be a "fancy," but in providing the quote, Kerouac rejects it as a fallacy by asserting the importance of spontaneous play. He argues that "when a thing is ridiculous it is subject to laughter and reprisal, and may be cast away like an old turd ... a thing gone dead. There were no images springing up in the brain of Cody Pomeray that were repugnant to him at their outset. They were all beautiful. There was a clarity and pureness in his mind ... Time and history are not made of turds" (*Visions of Cody* 306). Kerouac defends the validity of his own "visions," the record of the moments he is experiencing as he is experiencing them at the present moment. Just as children make up the "rules" of the game as they

playing, so too does Kerouac, and he draws upon the child's imagination to make his point. He writes, "there were no images immediately and sensationally ridiculous ... it's just a matter of loving your own life, loving the story of your own life, loving the dreams in your sleep as parts of your life, as little children do and Cody did" (*Visions of Cody* 307). But in drawing upon the visions of these two different entities, Kerouac admits an important distinction between the two subjects. By pointing out that children "do" love their lives and Cody "did," Kerouac admits to the latter's status as a historical subject. Cody in the present is not the same as Cody from the narrator's memory, and this juxtaposition begins to unravel the hero subject.

According to Pollock, "Metonymic writing is often ... filled with longing for a lost subject/object, for a subject/object that has disappeared into history or time, and for what, in the face of that disappearance, may seem both the inadequacy and impossibility of evocation" (84). It is precisely this dilemma, the disappearance of Cody and how to record it, that Kerouac addresses as he allows Cody's voice to address his own authorial inadequacies. Talking to Jack, Cody admonishes, "Jack looking at me ... is thinking I have great starlight in my eyes – I ain't nothin but a simple honest pimp, I ain't, fah, why ... I'm Cody Pomeray. I ain't got nothin to do with all that...I'm not to be played on a piccolo" (*Visions of Cody* 322). Kerouac must admit, to both himself and to his audience, the limits of his own memory's tendency to "fancy" Cody as an image object. Sitting in San Francisco divorced from the hey-day of their road adventures Kerouac admits that "I felt like a portrait artist; I felt more like he was a ghost I'd come to see" and that in reporting on the ghost he is "tired of telling over and over again about Cody's history ... I don't know, I'm sometimes ... completely at a fucking loss" (*Visions of Cody* 335, 345).

Loss is an apt utterance, especially because it is disappearance that marks the end of his and Cody's relationship. Kerouac vividly expresses this in a courtroom scene between him and Cody as he begins to write towards disappearance to signify the novel's conclusion.

In a scene where his narrator is the defendant and Cody is the prosecutor and judge, Kerouac marks the ultimate performance of disappearance, death itself. In "Imitation" the author writes of Jack Duluoze that he is a "LOCAL BOY INDICTED OF FORGERY" and in the courtroom scene his potential sentence is played out. Cody begins:

"Sirs, the defendant is an impostor French-Canadian from New England; in any case he deserves punishment ... **JACK**. I can't allow –succumb – it's too much –anybody squeals – **JUDGE CODY**. (... *performing it*) ... (to Jack) Things happen, man; things happen; you've got to expect it sometime, the bad news, the worse. No use kiddin yourself **JACK**. What am I losing? **Cody**. None of us know **Jack**. So goes **Cody**. Be careful, Jack be careful – Hang him, men (*On the gallows,*) **Jack**. I wanted to tell about – but the calluses, the—(*hanged*) (Visions of Cody 360)

As Cody's utterance signifies, Kerouac moves from describing the loss of Cody to doing it, admitting the ultimate surrender to time in the act of death itself. For Pollock this move from "*representation*" to "*enactment*" in performative writing "gains by losing, by giving itself away—in the double sense of revealing its own materiality and letting go of the object/referent conventionally held tight" (84-5). Soon after his metonymic death Kerouac describes his gain in one of his most poignant passages from author to reader. He muses:

I'm writing this book because we're all going to die – In the loneliness of my life ... nothing here but my own tragic hands that once were guarded by a world, a sweet attention, that now are left to guide and disappear their own way into the common dark of all our death, sleeping in me raw bed, alone and stupid; with just this one pride and consolation: my heart broke

in the general despair and opened up inwards to the Lord, I made a supplication in this dream. (*Visions of Cody* 368).

Writing is the only way Kerouac knows how to save himself temporarily from mortality. But even this is a form of disappearance, a moment of un/writing himself by admitting the inadequacies that guide his own disappearance.

After admitting his own as well as Cody's disappearance, Kerouac goes back and re-inserts much of the same horizontal material from *On the Road* to conclude his novel. This final section, which is composed sometimes verbatim from his earlier version of the novel, seems at first counterfeit given the amount of self-reflexivity that makes up so much of the novel. But it too is a competing vision, and Kerouac places it towards the end to show it in direct contrast to his earlier novel's horizontal account. Kerouac is able to place more emphasis on the sketching of these accounts, but the return to the past as a form of nostalgia has already run its course. Finally, after all of the mileage, jazz joints, letters, and at least five different competing versions of his adventures with Neal Cassady as Cody Pomeray/Dean Moriarty, Kerouac is able to eclipse his hero subject as he concludes *Visions of Cody*:

YET, AND YES, THERE'S CODY POMERAY ... cutting to work....
I'm a fool, the new day rises on the world and on my foolish life.... I not only accept loss forever, I am made of loss – I am made of Cody, too ... and Cody is blank at last.... Goodbye Cody – your lips in your moments of self-possessed thought and new found responsible goodness are as silent, make at least a noise, and mystify with sense in nature, like the light of an automobile reflecting from the shiny silverpaint of a sidewalk tank this very instant, as silent and all this, as a bird crossing the dawn in search of the mountain cross and the sea beyond the city at the end of the land. Adios, you who watched the sun go down, at the rail, by my side, smiling – Adios, King. (*Visions of Cody* 397-8)

Finally, in the presence of silence, Kerouac is able to find a resting place for his hero subject. Cody may be gone, but the competing visions of his spirit, of that memory, may

never be truly laid to rest. Kerouac's "adios" provides "a space of absence made present in desire and imagination, through which readers may pass like shadows or fiends ... tentative, wild, demanding, almost always and never really free" (Pollock 86).

Conclusion

There is an image in *Visions of Cody* that weaves its way through the novel as well as in several of Kerouac's other books. Kerouac describes the image as Cody's "prime focal goal, the place he was always rushing ... nothing less and nothing more than the redbrick wall behind the red neons" (*Visions of Cody* 78-9). It is a metaphor of contradictions, as the red neon flickering on the wall represents the excitement and adrenaline of a Saturday night, the pulse of possibility. The redbrick wall lies behind, its reality symbolizing the stopping point of fixed reality. It, too, is a place without words.

Kerouac relinquishes that:

Saturday night is to be best found in the redbrick wall behind the neons....
Saturday night is when those things that haunt us beyond our speech and the formations of our thoughts suddenly wear a sad aspect that is crying to be seen and noticed all around and we can't do anything about it and neither could Cody ... there's nothing to say because you can't say what you know, it's a void....(*Visions of Cody* 82-3)

The void is marked by loss, but this loss, too, acts as a generative act. It provides the place where Cody and Jack are able to accept their contradictory selves, the desire for freedom and stability that they find in each other and in America. As Kerouac puts it, it is the space where:

he does not know, does not know, cannot know, even I don't really know, and that thing twelve, thirteen feet over his head, that spot haunted red wall, what it is that makes the approaching night so exciting, so shivering, so all-fired what-where, so deep.... the poor hidden brick of America, the actual place that you must go if you must bang your head to bang it at all, the center of the grief and what Cody now saw and realized from all that time the center of the ecstasy. (*Visions of Cody* 86-7)

The redbrick/neon is an important trope of the novel because it parlays itself into a multi-vocal sense of go and stop. Among other things, Weinreich lists such dualities working within the passage as “building/collapsing, appearance/reality, expansion/limitation, happiness/sadness: America in its structure (its values) and spirit (though haunted)” (81). There is one more duality that the metaphor provides as well, the nature of spontaneous prose itself, and the image helps mark the transition that Kerouac was making from *On the Road* to *Visions of Cody*.

In *Visions of Cody*, Kerouac makes his first novel length authorial attempt at rushing into the “Saturday night” of his spontaneous prose method. It is an important step in finding his voice as an artist, but one where he often must “bang his head” in trial and error, balancing horizontal storytelling with vertical meditation. This chapter locates both the “grief” and the “ecstasy” of *Visions of Cody*, a novel where Kerouac begins to find the performative voice of his fiction. To this end, this chapter locates Kerouac’s move from the modern picaresque narrative in *On the Road* to his postmodern use of performativity in the most experimental sections of *Visions of Cody*. In “Frisco: The Tape,” “Imitation of the Tape,” and “Joan Rawshanks in the Fog,” Kerouac explores the issues of performative writing as a form of post-literacy and the ontological exploration of human subjects.

In “Frisco: The Tape” Kerouac tries to convey the reciprocity of spontaneous conversation by meticulously transcribing conversations that he and Neal Cassady had over five nights in California. The experiment is a form of orature, where Kerouac utilizes the postwar invention of the tape recorder to present a hybridity of language by locating orality into print. It is also an attempt made by Kerouac to capture the

authenticity of live ontology despite the technological interference of the tape recorder. There are only modest moments of success, however, for Kerouac in his efforts to restore these behaviors. Ultimately, the section fails to achieve the author's goals and, because of this, Kerouac abandons its verisimilitude and descriptive voice and begins to write towards disappearance instead.

"Imitation of the Tape" is, in Kerouac's own words, a "GOOF." It is the counter-memory of the taped section, one where the author uses the citational function of performative writing to parody the descriptive function of his tape recorder experiment. "Imitation" replaces one extreme with another, as the latitude of automatism replaces the meticulous quality of the transcription. As a form of orature, Kerouac allows his own voice free range, but the "Imitation" fails as well due to its abandonment of the mediated story as a whole. Kerouac is well aware of the imitation's eccentricities, and in his final section he is finally able to provide himself the middle voice for the competing binaries he produces in the "Tape" and its "Imitation."

"Joan Rawshanks" is not one but many separate sketching entities that include the conclusion of the novel as a whole. The "Chapter" begins with the sketch of the title, a moment where Kerouac was able to witness a Hollywood movie shoot in California. The sketch is one of the first successful sites where Kerouac was able to combine his jewel-center of interest ("Joan Rawshanks in the fog"), with the multiple lines of perception weaving in and out of this narrative base line. In addressing the nascent quality of his own work, Kerouac provides a model of the unanswerable binary between liveness and its mediation. He refuses the dichotomy of the "take" and its finished product. Instead,

Kerouac abandons the luxury of his own editing room. This aesthetic results in valuing, rather than trying to hide, the unfinished and ongoing fog of narrative discovery itself.

After his “Joan Rawshanks” sketch, Kerouac swings his camera back onto Cody, producing his most successful attempt at combining the liveness of his subject with its mediation in his sketch on Cody and the Three Stooges. Utilizing the nervous quality of performative writing, Kerouac genealogically ties corporeality to the social body in which it resides. Kerouac’s sketch is about a body in protest, as Cody performs the stooged body to rupture the official bodies and history surrounding him. The author plays in the margins of dream and reality, and he is finally able to produce in writing a sketch that neither transcends nor ignores the issues of liveness and mediation that he raises earlier in the novel. Instead, the sketch goofs with both of these voices, and in doing so, Kerouac produces one of the most raucous conversations operating within the narrative as a whole.

But just as Cody and the Stooges mark the climax of Kerouac’s sketching achievements, it also represents the last great stand of Cody as the hero of the novel. For the rest of the novel, Kerouac must resolve himself in moving from describing to enacting the loss of Cody as a friend and as a subject. Fittingly, Kerouac concludes his novel by interjecting the image of silence to announce the passing of his modernistic hero subject. His “adios” provides the pivot point from where he resigns his subject as well as the horizontal approach that he utilized before to describe his subject. In saying goodbye, Kerouac resolves to turn towards the inventive voice he discovers over the course of writing the novel.

Visions of Cody is the most experimental of all Kerouac's novels. In this sense it may be the most generative as well, the transitional space where he was able to find the confidence to go beyond description to that of enactment by means of performative writing. It is also one of his sloppiest, especially if one read these series of experiments with the same expectations of his earlier novel that proved to be so successful, as many did. At times, his propensity towards goofing on language as well as shapelessness makes the writing seem more like a writer's notebook than it does a novel. Perhaps this is the reason why the novel was only published after Kerouac's death, and perhaps because of this, scholars have not been as attentive to the novel as they might be. A year before he died and after getting his manuscript rejected by yet another publisher, Kerouac wrote to Allen Ginsberg: "I suddenly read it the other day...and saw it was completely modern multimedia pop rock peote pot prose.... So why not? It's time." (*Letters 1957* 513).

This chapter echoes that the time to recognize the achievements of *Visions of Cody* is long overdue. To acknowledge the accomplishments of Kerouac's novel of disappearance, he may again appear, not just in our susceptibility towards his biographical life, but as a recognized performative writer in the first order. Kerouac was certainly cognizant of his own need to re-invent himself, as in his next novel he attempts to use his method of spontaneous prose in a more cohesive and sustained manner. Recognizing the problems of *Visions of Cody*, Kerouac's next challenge was to combine the inventive voice of his writing method with a sustained approach to storytelling itself. What he needed was a means to synthesize the creative act of spontaneity with the subjects of his fiction. To do so, Kerouac turns from his present condition to that of his

autobiographical past. Just as he was able to transcend his penchant towards spontaneous description to that of enactment, so too would he be able to re-invent his approach altogether by means of creative amalgamation in the novel known as *Dr. Sax*.

Chapter Five: The Memory and Dream of Spontaneity in *Dr. Sax*

The year 1952 marked the turning point in the artistic life of Jack Kerouac. Emboldened by his transition into spontaneous prose, Kerouac set out to mine not his present condition, but the historicity of his own childhood. In 1952 he did so, traveling to Mexico City to stay with William Burroughs and writing what is arguably his finest novel, *Doctor Sax: Faust Part Three*. We can see Kerouac's commitment to his new writing technique from the novel's outset, as he begins:

THE OTHER NIGHT I had a dream that I was sitting on the sidewalk on Moody Street, Pawtucketville, Lowell, Mass., with a pencil and paper in my hand saying to myself 'Describe the wrinkly tar of this sidewalk, also the iron pickets of Textile Institute, or the doorway where Lousy and you and G.J.'s always sittin and don't stop to think of words when you do stop, just stop to think of the picture better—and let your mind off yourself in this work.' (Dr. Sax 3)

Kerouac's admonishment to himself here to see "the picture better" would later appear as a sketching description in an alternative version in his "Belief & Technique of Modern Prose," his 1959 "to-do list" version of "Essentials," written the same year *Dr. Sax* was first published. That Kerouac alludes to a dream in the opening paragraph is also telling, as *Dr. Sax* was itself based on a dream that the author had in 1948 (*Letters* 1940 359). The novel was conceived around the same time as *On the Road*, but after beginning *Dr. Sax* as a children's novella, he abandoned it in favor of the more traditional *Road* novel. Even so, Kerouac often alludes to the story in *On the Road*, as Dr. Sax appears in sections such as the "Shrouded Traveler," a mysterious entity that refuses to escape Kerouac's poetic landscape.

As it falls within the chronology of this study, *Dr. Sax* represents a significant step in Kerouac's mastery of his spontaneous prose method. Unlike many of his other

novels, *Dr. Sax* follows in the same artistic direction of *Visions of Cody*, a continuation of his non-horizontal and postmodern emphasis on process over product. However, unlike in his *Visions* novel, Kerouac is able to reign in the excesses of his performative writing method, composing a novel that doesn't forfeit content for the sake of spontaneous form. *Dr. Sax* resides somewhere in between the literary voices of *On the Road* and *Visions of Cody*, composed in what he would call his "middle style" (Sampas 2). Perhaps for this reason *Dr. Sax* was published in 1959, fourteen years before the much more loosely composed *Visions* novel was deemed worthy for print. Theado asserts of the *Sax* novel that it is Kerouac's "most well structured book.... in this coming of age story Kerouac for the first time used his newly developed spontaneous prose to recover in depth his own private past" (92). Mixed in with the reality of this autobiographical impetus of the novel, Kerouac provides an intertextual and self-reflexive survey of his childhood imagination. It is not just a story of the self, but of the many competing discourses that make up a continuing sense of the self. Kerouac provides a collection that ranges from and speaks of his sense of nationality, ethnicity, spirituality, and regionalism. The result is a novel that Kerouac boasted, "It's the greatest book I ever wrote, or that I will write" (Nicosia 410). The question is why Kerouac considered the novel his finest work, and the purpose of this chapter is to investigate this claim. To do so, I argue that the "middle style" of *Dr. Sax* is a contribution to our understanding of spontaneous prose, one that provides performative recourse for doing what his two earlier novels could not: namely, provide balance for an experimental fiction that would sacrifice neither the invention of content nor form.

Typical of Kerouac's critics of the time, the reviewers of *Dr. Sax* would not agree with his assessment that the novel is his "greatest." The *New York Times* rejected the novel as "largely psychopathic ... pretentious and unreadable farrago of childhood fantasy play." There was one positive review from *Time* magazine based not so much on the novel's merits as on what the novel did not contain. The reviewer described *Dr. Sax* as "an elegy to the warm, safe smells of a tenement kitchen and the dark mysteries of a city neighborhood," but went on to praise it because it didn't mention "such adult concerns as marijuana, Zen Buddhism, or women" (*Letters* 1957 230). Ironically enough, Kerouac wrote the novel in a junkie's bathroom using scraps of toilet paper at times, a place where drugs were not only available but also rampant.

Both reviews show incredulity for Kerouac as a serious writer and a general refusal to piece together the various discourses operating within its experimental voice(s). Perhaps for this reason, as well, neither the general readership nor literary scholarship has paid as much attention to the novel. But Kerouac himself provides remedy to understand the experimental nature of the novel, offering early on that "Memory and dream are intermixed in this mad universe" (*Dr. Sax* 5). The novel is ultimately a coming of age story, by now a familiar theme that Kerouac would continue to mine throughout his literary career. But it is also Kerouac's most fantastic novel, a book that parlays different literary references that range from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* to comic serials. Kerouac consistently calls on an extremely wide array of literary and popular antecedents, and in this sense *Dr. Sax* is Kerouac's most prolific attempt at mining the past to tell a story by means of performative re-invention. In this capacity as well, Kerouac is able to go beyond the confines of traditional autobiographical fiction.

According to Ronna Johnson in her essay, “DOCTOR SAX: THE ORIGINS OF VISION IN THE DULUOZ LEGEND,” (sic) Kerouac’s Duluo^z legend and the novel *Dr. Sax* “transcends autobiography in its invention and purpose.... Personal experience ... is highly valued, not as a source for autobiography but for the documentation of a common human history.... the emphasis is placed on a communal representation” (18-19). In support of this line of reasoning, *Dr. Sax* is explored here to explain how spontaneous prose is utilized as an inventive practice of personal and collective history making and meaning.

Perhaps in no other novel is Kerouac so obviously referential or allusive. The novel isn’t shy about acknowledging its antecedents, it revels in them, and because of this a departure must be made in looking at it from a genealogical perspective from the one promoted by Joseph Roach. In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach asserts that “the relentless search for the purity of origins is a voyage not of discovery but of erasure” (6). Roach’s statement is indicative of his tendency to view the performance of history as an act of forgetting, seen most readily in his discussion of surrogation, the replacement of one commodity with another. But in making this argument, Roach himself forgets the means by which performance acts to remember the past. It is this point that Diana Taylor raises in her work, *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Taylor comments that “Roach’s contribution to our thinking about performance as a form of surrogation has been extremely generative, but it is equally urgent to note the cases in which surrogation as a model for cultural continuity is rejected precisely because, as Roach notes, it allows for the collapse of vital historical links and political moves” (46). In place of surrogation,

Taylor accesses historiography by looking for ways in which culture shifts and doubles as a performative strategy for preserving, rather than erasing, history.

To this end, Taylor calls upon both the archive, “supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)” (19). As a means of documenting the doubling and resistant form of performative memory in the repertoire as well as its archive, Taylor describes what she calls scenario. She defines this concept as “a sketch or outline of the plot of a play, giving particulars of the scenes, situations, etc.... the scenario predates the script and allows for many possible endings” (28). In this sense scenario follows Schechner’s example in describing performance as at least a twice-behaved behavior. Scenario is based on familiar narratives, as in *Dr. Sax*’s retelling of the Faustian legend, itself a performance that predates Goethe’s telling of a man who sells his soul to the devil. But the scenario allows for many different historiographical paths of its storytelling, and Taylor outlines the means by which authors such as Kerouac might parlay both the archive and the repertoire to engage their subjects. In addition to Taylor’s discussion of the archive and the repertoire, which informs an understanding of Kerouac’s call upon history in the form of scenario, another shift in methodology must be provided to explain the means by which Kerouac is able to synthesize the intertextual subject materials of *Dr. Sax* with his performative writing method.

In *Teletheory*, Gregory Ulmer provides the theory of “Mystory” as a means of conducting research appropriate to a post-literate age. Ulmer argues that the Mystory project allows the production of multi-media texts, as in the incorporation of

performative writing elements. Mystory alludes to four separate rudiments: History (as a subjective and inventive pattern of personal discovery), Herstory (as a neologism that provides “an alternative to mastery and assertion”), Mystery (drawing clues and working from anecdote rather than authoritative accounts) and My story (as an autobiographical imperative relating to the subject(s) of research). According to Ulmer, “A mystorical essay is not ... the communication of a prior sense, but the discovery of a direction by means of writing” (106-113). In addition to understanding research that goes beyond traditional expository essays, Mystory also provides a means of appreciating how authors, such as Kerouac, write history as a means of personal and collective genealogical invention.

In their discussion of their adaptation of Mystory to the performance classroom, Michael and Ruth Laurion Bowman provide a means of understanding how Mystory relates specifically to avant-garde literary forms. Providing a topography of understanding the various elements working within the genre, they provide that “*mystoriography*” can be understood as a means of composition that works within three general discourses: “the professional (any branch of formal knowledge or expertise); the popular (including both contemporary pop culture forms ... and more traditional resources, such as family lore, community stories, oral histories, etc.); and the personal (individual memories, experiences)” (“Performing the Mystory” 163). To explicate this understanding to their students, the Bowmans utilize various experimental texts to help their students move from traditional “readerly” approaches to scholarship to “writerly” approaches to help understand how texts are made. According to the Bowmans, “This writerly approach to reading ... is quite useful when dealing with avant-garde texts and

performances, for many students find such things meaningless or nonsensical” (“Performing the Mystory” 166). This switch to understanding how texts are made provides a means to understanding Kerouac’s spontaneous experiments in the novel *Dr. Sax*, to show that it indeed goes beyond readings that the novel is merely “psychopathic.”

As part of the Mystory project, Ulmer outlines specific institutional discourses that he argues makes up a collective sense of the self. According to Ulmer, “I say ‘institution’ to point out that the ‘discourse’ (all language or meaning-producing activities, verbal and nonverbal, behavioral, all the ‘practices’ of the domain) is moderated by administrative entities with actual powers of oversight” (24). Mystory proposes that the identity of the self is made up of these discourses, and in writing one’s Mystory the author traces and interrogates how these texts speak to one another. According to the Bowmans, “The fundamental methodological principle in Ulmer’s textshop is the Barthesian notion that every text contains a set of ‘instructions’ for making another text.” These sets of instructions, the “principles or techniques of composition,” change from project to project, therefore the individual Mystory “will depend in part on the texts and performances” that make up that individual’s Mystory (“Performing the Mystory” 166-7). Mystory demonstrates its own subjectivity, self-reflexively demonstrating what Roland Barthes identified as the “middle voice.” According to Ulmer, this middle voice is a reaction “based on the reflexive, self-conscious nature of modernist writing that claimed to be knowledge only of language, not of life. In the middle voice one is the recipient of one’s own actions: responsibility is neither assumed nor avoided but is discovered as an effect of writing. Mystory is composed in the middle voice” (*Internet* 57). Communicating through the Mystory is not

just a relationship between the author and reader, but through the self, a sense of invention that promotes the spontaneous sense of discovery that Kerouac was specifically doing (as well as arguing for).

In his latest incarnation of the Mystory project in *Internet Invention*, Ulmer provides four institutional discourses by which the Mystory can be understood and invented. They are: Career (“the specialized knowledge that one acquires as an expert in some given career field”); Family (“the discursive regime being the habits and customs specific to that family, as governed by such things as ethnicity, race, gender and the like”; Entertainment (“The discourse learned is that of cultural mythology encountered in popular genres ... carried through the media”); and Community (“the history of one’s nation, state, or community.... This history represents the memory of the collectivity” (81). As *Dr. Sax*’s structure shows, Kerouac works within all of these wide-ranging categories.

The novel itself is divided into six separate “Books,” and it is told in two narrative voices. “Jack Duluo” is bifurcated according to age, as young “Jackie” and older “Jack” share the story of a young French-Canadian boy growing up in Lowell, Massachusetts during the 1930s, much like Kerouac’s own childhood. Jackie handles the first person accounts, while Jack relays narrative from a more detached and reflective perspective. In the first Book, entitled “Ghosts of the Pawtucketville Night,” Kerouac introduces the main characters as well as the setting of Lowell, Massachusetts, his boyhood home and scene for the duration of the novel. Here we are first introduced to Dr. Sax, the mysterious black-clad individual who serves as Jackie’s alter ego and as the defender of Lowell. He is a character based in part on the radio and pulp hero of the 1930s and ’40s

known as the Shadow. Over the course of the novel we learn that Jackie and Dr. Sax must battle the Wizard Faustus, the vampire Count Condu, as well as their minions who seek to raise the great world snake of evil which resides under a castle in Lowell and whose purpose is to bring Armageddon down on humanity.

Book Two, entitled “A Gloomy Bookmovie,” is comprised of twenty-five separate sketches, or “scenes” as they are called in the novel. Kerouac utilizes the tools of a film auteur, developing wide-shots and close-ups of three intersecting narratives: Jackie at home during a storm with his mother, Jackie playing imaginary horse races with marbles, and a game of pool between his father and the Shadow/Sax character at the local social club. All three narratives are intertwined as Kerouac breaks down the boundary between the performance of fantasy and everyday life, an overarching trope of the novel and his spontaneous prose itself. “More Ghosts” is the title of Book Three, the shortest of the novel. As it alludes to the Book’s title, Kerouac continues to meditate on his general fascination with all things uncanny. The recurring haunting of Jackie is explored in everything from a Sunday drive with his father to the redbrick neon alleys of Lowell.

“The Night the Man with the Watermelon Died” introduces Book Four, and in it Kerouac relays the memory of a man dying on a bridge in front of him and his mother while they were walking in the moonlight when he was a child. This memory is intercut with a story of Dr. Sax’s own account of terrifying a group of highbrow artists partying in the town’s castle, a place that is consistently returned to as a mysterious centering point of the novel and the site of the story’s final conflict. Kerouac provides Sax’s writing technique, in part, as a means of parodying the “official” voice of fiction popular during his time. Dr. Sax is, as the author puts it in contrast to his own prose, “no sophisticated

writer” (*Dr. Sax* 135). Book Five, “The Flood,” gives a first person account of the destruction of Lowell based upon the actual event of the Merrimack River flood in March 1936, an event that happened when Kerouac was fourteen years old. Welcoming the flood at first because of its cancellation of everyday life, young Jackie soon sees the river as evil itself, an allusion to the snake of evil that he and Sax must battle. The flood brings the situation to a head, and in the final Book, titled “The Castle,” Jackie must shed his innocence to save his hometown with the help of Sax. Working topically from Ulmer’s four institutional categories of the Mystory, in what follows, I trace how Kerouac worked simultaneously within these discourses to provide a sense of historical invention for both himself and for his collectivity in the novel *Dr. Sax*. In doing so, my hope is to interrogate how both the novel’s spontaneous “middle style” and the notion of the “middle voice” of Mystory contribute to our understanding of each in light of one another.

“The pathway to wisdom is through excess. (Goethe)”

In *Teletheory* Ulmer states of Career discourse that “The collective meaning of history is determined now ... within the specialized knowledge that one acquires as an expert in some given career field.... This knowledge is the means by which one earns one’s livelihood (work), but the knowledge of an avocation may be used instead” (294-5). For Kerouac, this specialized knowledge was determined by his fledgling status as an author of fiction, fledgling because by the time he sat down to work on *Dr. Sax* in 1952, Kerouac had already been introduced to the rejection process of the publishing industry. He had tasted success in publishing *The Town and the City* in 1950, but it was an economic disappointment, and as a result of this and its mimetic emphasis of writing in

the style of Thomas Wolfe, Kerouac was determined to forge new ground in the form of his spontaneous prose. His editors and friends would not be so enthusiastic. But being well-versed in European and U.S. American letters, Kerouac forged on anyway, wanting more than anything to be taken seriously as a writer of fiction of the first order.

Ulmer points out that Career discourse is composed “within the parameters and paradigms of the disciplines and professions that set the problems and determine the criteria for evaluating proposed solutions” (*Internet* 24). To be taken seriously as a writer in *Dr. Sax*, Kerouac proposed to hitch his fledgling star to a performance text that had already been considered a classic. His attempt at this high-brow trajectory can be seen in the novel’s subtitle, *Faust Part Three*, a clear indication of his intention to update the Goethe epic. Such a transparent nod to the literary influence of *Faust* specifically addresses Taylor’s contribution of *scenario* to the understanding of performance genealogies. According to Taylor, “Simultaneously *setup* and *action*, scenarios frame and activate social dramas. The setup lays out the range of possibilities; all the elements are there: encounter, conflict, resolution, and *dénouement*, for example.... All scenarios have localized meaning, though many attempt to pass as universally valid” (28). Performance scenarios are based upon familiar narratives and plot structures, although they attempt to localize these for a new audience. Unlike a genealogy that functions as a form of cultural erasure, scenarios function via parody and the renewal of familiar discourses. Taylor clarifies that scenarios “are passed on and remain remarkably coherent paradigms of seemingly unchanging attitudes and values. Yet, they adapt constantly to reigning conditions.... scenarios refer to ... specific repertoires of cultural imaginings” (31). It is through scenario and the narrative provided by Goethe that

Kerouac plays upon one of the most ancient cultural imaginings of collective history, the story of good vs. evil, and the battle waged for humanity between God and the devil.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* tells the story of the wager between God and the devil for the soul of Doctor Faust, a scholar whose thirst for knowledge pushes him to reject Christianity in favor of magic and alchemy. Faust makes a deal with Mephistopheles that in exchange for his servitude on earth, Faust will do the same for him in the afterlife (Goethe 40). Over the course of the play, we follow Faust from the time of his pact and his various exploits with Mephistopheles, which lead to Faust acquiring vast wealth and land. In his old age, just as he is about to be taken by Mephistopheles, Faust repudiates the brutality that he has wrought and vows to help humanity, doing so by giving up his land to the people he has persecuted (Goethe 292). This act serves as his saving grace, as the angels from heaven come down and shower roses while snatching Faust back to heaven while the devil curses his defeat. Goethe's *Faust* is a morality play, one that promulgates the lesson that despite humanity's evil, all are capable of being saved by God's grace.

On an allegorical level, Goethe's *Faust* is the basis for the German historiographer Oswald Spengler's assertion in *The Decline of the West* that the past 18th and 19th centuries are "Faustian" on the basis of modernity's incessant striving for knowledge by humanity. It was Burroughs who had turned Kerouac to Spengler's historical study, and, while staying with him in 1952, Kerouac intended to update the Faustian legend into the 20th century. Writing about the subtitle of *Dr. Sax*, Kerouac states that "'Faust Part Three' simply means this: Goethe wrote Faust Parts one and two, ending with dull Canals, and I just wrote Part Three of the Faust Legend about the soul of

the West. Faust sold his soul to the devil but Sax rushed in and called Faust a bastard” (*Letters 1957* 341). As Kerouac saw it, the last century had seen the culmination of Faust’s bargain with the devil on what was now an even more perilous and global scale. Situated in the postwar period at the onset of the nuclear and space age, *Dr. Sax* is set at a time that Kerouac saw as a culmination of the collective warning supplied by Spengler.

The novel and its tie-in to *Faust* also held significance for Kerouac as a career-saving discourse. In an interview the author laments, “You know for instance that I, as author of *Doctor Sax*, am no clown-drunkard merely. That I am a man of stature which will be recognized when the dust settles” (Hayes 34). Unfortunately for Kerouac, the former rather than latter title holds truer in certain literary circles. *Dr. Sax* was greeted unenthusiastically from the outset, as editors rejected it outright because it departed so drastically from *On the Road*. Looking back on several of these rejections after *On the Road*, editor Malcolm Cowley singles out *Dr. Sax* specifically, stating that “These other manuscripts did not arouse my enthusiasm.... *Doctor Sax* I think I was completely wrong about. I think I should have forced *Doctor Sax* down Viking’s throat.... that was the best of them” (Gifford and Lee 242). This latter summary of the novel was one much different than the original summation made by Cowley. In an internal document in Viking’s offices Cowley called the novel, “an exercise in self-abuse” (*Letters 1957* 78). Despite these overtures, Kerouac remained steadfast in his belief that the novel would help forge his literary reputation. In 1954, three years after discovering his method of spontaneous prose and unable to place any of the literary manuscripts written in its form, Kerouac was still able to maintain a sense of humor about his literary influence. Writing in a journal about “philosophical falsehoods” that led him astray, he wryly puts “The

pathway to wisdom is through excess. (Goethe)” as number one on his list (*Letters 1940* 448).

As an updated version of Goethe’s *Faust* legend, *Dr. Sax* utilizes this concept of excess as the novel incorporates the symbol of Faust on multiple levels. As the hero of a coming of age tale, Jackie himself plays Faust, as he must decide between the knowledge of home and Christianity and the supernatural mysteries supplied by Lowell and Dr. Sax. Ultimately, Jackie Dulooz decides in favor of the latter, although in this role he takes a pragmatic approach that again is supplied in the character of Sax. He offers, “I gave up the church to ease my horrors—too much candlelight, too much wax--.... Doctor Sax traversed the darknesses between pillars in the church at vespertime” (*Dr. Sax* 66-7). In his quest for knowledge, Jackie himself decides to traverse the pillars between his private knowledge of Sax and his public role as an innocent childhood actor. In *Faust*, the main character laments that “Two souls, alas, are dwelling in my breast, And either would be severed from its brother” (*Faust* 27). So too must Jackie negotiate these two forms of knowledge. The devil, as represented in part by Sax himself, supplies Jackie with “Part of that force which would Do ever evil, and does ever good” (*Faust* 33).

The conflict between these two selves is best illustrated in a scene where young Jackie decides to perform the role of Dr. Sax to the other neighborhood children. Calling himself the “Black Thief,” Jackie puts on the slouch hat and cape “red and black like Mephistopheles.” From his friend Dicky Hampshire’s house, Ti Jean steals various items, which eventually terrorize his childhood pal. Jackie leaves mysterious notes stating that “The Black Thief Has Struck,” all while letting out the sinister “Mwee hee hee ha ha” of his childhood hero. According to Jackie, “Doctor Sax blessed me from the

roof, where he hid—a fellow worker in the void!” (*Dr. Sax* 47-9). But soon enough Jackie learns the price of his performance from his audience’s perspective. Dicky’s mom asks Jack if he is the black thief, to which he recalls: “‘Yes, Mrs. Hampshire,’ I replied immediately, hypnotized by the same mystery that once made her say, when I asked her if Dicky was at home or at the show, in a dull, flat, tranced voice as if she was speaking to a Spiritualist, ‘Dicky ... is ... gone ... far ... away ... ’” (*Dr. Sax* 49). Jackie has to say he is sorry, and watch his friend wipe his tears away with a red handkerchief. Of his traverses into the void, he rhetorically asks, “‘What foolish power had I discovered and been possessed by?’” (*Dr. Sax* 49). The question signifies the cost of being possessed by the performativity of his imagination’s repertoire, and much like Faust, it is a performance that Jackie has to negotiate in his adventures with Dr. Sax.

During the flood of the Merrimac, Jack has a vision of Dr. Sax while playing on a raft that becomes untied and perilously drifts into the river. Noting the river, Jack states that “it had the scaly ululating back of a sea monster, of a Snake, it was an unforgettable flow of evil and of wrath and of Satan barging thru my home town.” His friend calls for him to jump off, but Jack envisions a dove greeting Dr. Sax, who is the “Enemy of the Snake, Shade of Dark, Phantom Listener at My Window.” At the last moment before his raft is swept into the tide of the snake, Jack jumps off and looking back at his makeshift raft he simply states, “it could have been my Ship” (*Dr. Sax* 168-71). In this passage, Kerouac signifies the danger of following Sax, as Jackie risks his very mortality to gain access to the mysteries of Sax and his crusade. But it also serves as a lamentation, as Jackie wishes he could completely abandon his life to follow the path laid out for him by Dr. Sax.

To follow in the footsteps of Sax, Jackie must lose his innocence and come to grips with his own faith. In the climactic scene of *Faust*, the angels that carry Faust's soul away from the devil strew roses while stating, "'Whoever strives in ceaseless toil, Him we may grant redemption.' And when on high, transfigured love Had added intercession, The blest will throng to him above With welcoming compassion" (303). Kerouac uses the symbol of the rose to mark Jackie's redemption as well. After he witnesses the death of the snake, Jackie passes a Catholic grotto, which earlier in the novel he described: "Everything there was to remind me of Death, and nothing in praise of life" (*Dr. Sax* 125). But this time, the scene grants the narrator something quite different. Walking by the same space Jack concludes the novel:

I went along home by the ding dong bells and daisies, I put a rose in my hair. I passed the Grotto again and saw the cross on top of that hump of rocks, saw some old French Canadian ladies praying step by step on their knees. I found another rose, and put another rose in my hair, and went home. By God. (*Dr. Sax* 245).

Despite his role as the "Black Thief" and the knowledge he gains by the temptations laid out to him by Dr. Sax, Jack is ultimately redeemed by his choice of transforming this knowledge from fear into faith. It is an allegiance between the natural and super-natural worlds, something Kerouac was trying to achieve in the form of his artistic method as well.

In addition to his alter ego Jackie, Kerouac interrogates the nature of his boyhood hero Dr. Sax as a symbol of the Faustian anti-hero. Like Faust, Sax works in the world of magic and alchemy to perfect his knowledge. According to the narrator, "he was a big fool forever looking for the golden perfect solution, he went around having himself a ball searching mysterious humps of earth around the world for a reason so fantastic—for the

boiling point of evil” (*Dr. Sax* 28). This evil is represented in the snake, and it is Sax’s mission to kill it before it conquers the earth. To achieve this end “He looked all over for herbs that he knew someday he would perfect into an alchemic-almost poison art that could cast out a certain hypnotic and telepathic light that would make the Snake drop dead” (31). But despite his penchant for black magic and his role as tempter to Jackie, Sax himself is constructed as a kind of super-hero for Jackie. He is “the King of Anti Evil,” and despite his Mephistopheles cape he looks “like an angel saint” (169, 223). As a story arc that echoes the one supplied by Goethe, Sax is Faustian in his defeat at the hands of evil and in his redemption by a divine power.

As the King of Anti Evil, Dr. Sax proves to be woefully incompetent in his battle with the snake. Sax storms the castle with Jackie where the snake resides, but his potion fails to kill the snake and he himself “disappeared ... in a big heave.” After the snake erupts from the castle Sax appears again only to be confronted with his own mortality. According to Jack, “He had taken off his slouch hat, he had taken off his cape.... He was standing with his hands in his pockets ... his face was back to normal color, it turned green only at night.... And he’s standing there saying ‘Goddam, it didn’t work’” (*Dr. Sax* 238, 240). Stripped of his super-powers, Sax and Jackie prepare for their end when suddenly a huge bird arrives from the heavens to pluck the snake away. Seeing this “Bird of Paradise” Jack states that “not Sax, me, the Devil’s assistant or the Devil himself could keep from seeing the horror and the power roaring in upon this phrale of Lowell.” After the bird swoops up the snake, Dr. Sax admonishes, “I’ll be damned.... The Universe disposes of its own evil!” (245). Sax is, in the end, just a regular guy, and only admitting his own mortality saves him. His own personal powers prove useless in the

face of ultimate evil, and it is only by divine intervention that he is saved. Only through faith in the Universe, and by extension God's grace, does Sax as a Faustian character find an alternative in battling evil. The event of the snake and the bird of paradise free Sax of his Faustian desire for ultimate knowledge. Jack reports, "I have seen Doctor Sax several times since, at dusk, in autumn, when the kids jump up and down and scream—he only deals in glee now" (245).

The defeat of Sax also allows Jackie freedom by supplanting Sax's hero status for his own agency. By realizing that Sax is really only a mortal being and not some dark super-hero, Jackie is able to resolve his own Faustian desires and find faith in his own experiences. In placing the roses in his hair, Jackie signifies his own significance without the interference of Sax as personal savior. This reversal works not only for Jackie the character, but also as an artistic response to the act of spontaneous writing itself. Kerouac parodies this reversal in a segment where we are introduced to the only written record supplied by Sax himself.

In Book Four, Sax produces a manuscript detailing his exploits where he terrifies an avant-garde set of self-opinionated actors and artists who reside in the castle. Sax titles the piece "DOCTOR SAX, AN ACCOUNT OF HIS ADVENTURES WITH THE HUMAN INHABITANTS OF SNAKE CASTLE—Written & Arrang'd by Adolphus Asher Ghoulens, With a Hint Contain'd of Things Which Have Not Yet Seen Their End" (*Dr. Sax* 134). But before we read the contents of his writing, Kerouac provides an evaluative frame. Right before the first sentence Kerouac interjects that "Doctor Sax was no sophisticated writer" (135). From this, Sax proves his point by providing a horizontal account of his adventure. Dr. Sax, with green eyes, dark cape and hat, spies on the artists

until he storms the party and lets out his malevolent laugh. Sax writes, “Tremendously, he began to laugh; there was no end to his joy; his private knowledge of the world peeled forth from purple lips, publishing to all who were aware the secret wisdom.... And he was gone” (142). Besides being horizontal, the writing itself is melodramatic, an effect used by Kerouac to parody the pulp comics from which Dr. Sax was partially inspired. Although Kerouac and Sax write about the same material, taken together, Kerouac’s efforts are to be perceived as more masterful based upon their non-horizontal and spontaneous qualities.

Despite Jack’s admonishment as to the sophistication of Sax’s literary efforts, Sax does provide the narrator an important benefit in terms of his approach to language itself. Cruising together in the Lowell neighborhood, Sax says, “No need to worry-mix your mud with elephant flowers, adamantine boy—the hook and curl in the crook of eternity is a living thing.” Sax speaks in riddles, and as he did with Neal Cassady, Kerouac points to the importance of his oral eccentricities as a point of revival for the author’s writing. As Jackie puts it, “All his statements knock me on the head *Come in* even though I don’t understand them. I know that Doctor Sax is speaking to the bottom of my boy problems and they could all be solved if I could fathom his speech” (*Dr. Sax* 197). Just as *Faust* was meant to be orally delivered as a play, so too does Sax require an understanding that begins with oral eloquence. Kerouac utilizes the speech of Dr. Sax to benefit this understanding as a form of poetic delivery in the writing itself. As with his other novels, hearing Kerouac’s *Dr. Sax* is a different experience from reading it. In 2003 this became possible with the publication of the print and audio CD’s *Doctor Sax and the Great World Snake*, a screenplay written by Kerouac based upon his novel. Like Goethe’s

Faust, the performance places the context of the text into the oral tradition, an encouraging sign considering that Kerouac's writing is inspired here by his continued quest of writing towards post-literacy.

Of all the tie-ins to Goethe's character Faust, the most obvious in *Dr. Sax* is the Wizard and his allies of evil as represented in characters such as the vampire Count Condu. It's the Wizard's mission to bring up the snake to destroy Lowell, and he is the leader of the satanic cult that Sax and Jackie must battle. The Wizard's name is "Faustus," and he is described as the "Master of Earthly evil" (*Dr. Sax* 50). Kerouac aligns the Wizard with Goethe's *Faust*, but he also shows his knowledge of other Faustian legends. The Wizard "still bears the horrible marks of his strangulation and occupation by the Devil in the 13th century," a reference to the downfall of the original character Georg Faust (*Dr. Sax* 52; Paton, "Reconceiving" 140). Unlike Jackie or Sax, the Wizard and his co-conspirators never repudiate their evil ways, and as a result, most meet their doom from the very evil that they thought would serve them. Just as the snake arises to destroy humanity, "Count Condu was in his box, was being skewered to Eternity in the coals of the Pit where he and ten thousand gnomes fell headfirst moaning—with Baroque, Espiritu, Boaz Jr., Flapsnaw, La Contessa, Blook the Monster, nameless countless others" (*Dr. Sax* 239). Of all the evil characters, only the Wizard himself is spared at the end of the novel. Just as Mephistopheles is defeated in *Faust*, so too is the Wizard left feeling "dissatisfied" (245). Ultimately, the battle between good and evil is waged within the autonomy of everyone's individual soul. By utilizing the legend of Faust as a multi-symbolic character in the novel Kerouac's purpose, like Goethe's, is to show the power of personal choice and the consequences of these choices.

In a novel that utilizes the historiography of scenario by means of Goethe's *Faust*, Kerouac hopes also to show that this choice might contribute to his own status as an author of fiction. Just as Jackie comes into his own in the novel, so too does Kerouac in his development as a performative writer. By hitching his own work to that of Goethe, Kerouac provides a highbrow career discourse that he believed would one day save an already shaky literary reputation. Writing about his time as a rejected writer in the early 1950s Kerouac shares that he "was a bum, a brakeman, a seaman, a panhandler, a pseudo-Indian in Mexico, anything and everything, and went on writing because my hero was Goethe and I believed in art" ("Origins" 62).

My Brother the Ghost

In addition to the career discourse that Kerouac believed would salvage his own reputation as an artist, the author utilizes the familial as a shaping influence of *Dr. Sax*'s expression. Just as Goethe mixes the supernatural with the natural, Kerouac intermixes the human world in the form of his own childhood to interrogate the world of ghosts and their haunting. This is an ongoing interest of Kerouac's as we saw in *On the Road*. But in *Dr. Sax* the use of the ghost and the performance of haunting becomes most prevalent as the gothic tradition allows Kerouac to explore more fully the haunting of his familial past.

Kerouac's heavy use of the novelistic tropes of ghosts and haunting in *Dr. Sax* calls for a further theoretical understanding in relation to the performative writing method that the author supplies. According to Ulmer, family discourse is where "The individual is considered in terms of his/her family upbringing ... and the discursive regime being the

habits and customs specific to that family” (*Teletheory* 295). For Kerouac, the obsession with ghosts and their haunting began in his home in Lowell where *Dr. Sax* is set.

In *The Uncanny*, Sigmund Freud provides an understanding of familial haunting and its relationship to the psychoanalytic self as represented in literature. For Freud, the uncanny is an aesthetic experience involving some type of event and feeling that involves two separate species. Freud argues, “the uncanny element we know from experience arises either when repressed childhood complexes are revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs that have been *surmounted* appear to be once again confirmed” (155). The uncanny happens as a result of the blurring between fantasy and reality, the familiar made strange. As a result, Freud locates the uncanny feeling within a general variation of unsettling experience such as fear or dread. Freud specifically locates some uncanny phenomena happening as a result of childhood and familial discourses, such as the repetition impulse of the Oedipal complex. According to Freud, the uncanny leads to an animistic psychology, “a view characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with human spirits...this phase did not pass without leaving behind in us residual traces that can still make themselves felt, and that everything we now find ‘uncanny’ meets the criterion that is linked with these remnants of animistic mental activity” (147).

Two types of performance manifest as a result of these uncanny failures. The first is the experience of the double, where “a person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of his true self; or he may substitute the other’s self for his own. The self may thus be duplicated, divided and interchanged.” The second is the repetition compulsion, as experienced in different people and places, an “unintentional return... that transforms what would otherwise seem quite harmless into something uncanny and

forces us to entertain the idea of the fateful and the inescapable, when we should normally speak of ‘chance’” (142, 144).

Kerouac’s use of the specter in *Dr. Sax* is a performance of the familial uncanny, as it repeats a subjective sense of history where the author surrogates his own identity into that of other characters. According to Nicholas Royle, “It is impossible to think about the uncanny without this involving a sense of what is autobiographical, self-centered, based in one’s own experience. But it is also impossible to conceive of the uncanny without a sense of ghostliness, a sense of strangeness given to dissolving all assurances about the identity of a self. (16). As a coming of age novel, *Dr. Sax* is understood as a familial performance of the uncanny in terms of both its sense of the double and the repetition complex. Before Jackie can be born again as an adult, he must first shed his childhood skin. To do so, he must confront the hauntology of his own home.

When Jack Kerouac was four years old, his brother Gerard died of rheumatic heart disease, a pall that would continue to haunt the family throughout Jack’s life. Kerouac utilizes the death of his brother as a jumping off point in his various experiences with the uncanny in *Dr. Sax*. Describing the fear of his boyhood home and fantasies he writes, “I dreamed the horrible dream of the rattling red livingroom...I saw it in the dream all dancing and rattling like skeletons because my brother Gerard haunted them and dreamed I woke up screaming.... Memory and dream are intermixed in this mad universe” (*Dr. Sax* 5). Based on his experience of being haunted by the memory of his brother, Kerouac asserts the thesis statement of the entire novel, making it a significant point of reference for everything else that occurs. In his survey of the uncanny, Nicholas

Royle explains that “the feeling of the uncanny may be bound up with the most extreme nostalgia or ‘homesickness’, in other words a compulsion to return to an inorganic state, a desire (perhaps unconscious) to die, a death drive” (2). Indeed this becomes a unifying vision of *Dr. Sax*, as young Jackie sees death all around him, something not exclusive to the larger Duluo legend in general. Ronna Johnson explains that Kerouac’s “visions invariably reveal one truth most repressed in common experience: mortality.... He sees death at the core of sentience; it is an obstacle to fulfillment and the source of human suffering.... the seer emphasizes the origins, the character, and the consequences of visionary perceptions of mortality” (“VISION” 19). Kerouac begins the personal exploration of his own mortality at home, starting with the origin of his very creation.

Early on in the novel Kerouac describes the memory, “--I was born. Bloody rooftop. Strange deed. All eyes I came hearing the river’s red; I remember that afternoon, I perceived it through beads hanging in a door and through lace curtains and glass of a universal sad lost redness of mortal damnation ... the snow was melting. The snake was coiled in the hill not my heart” (*Dr. Sax* 17). Despite the factual basis of his telling and Kerouac’s acclaimed propensity for memory, the passage points towards the poetic implications of birth itself. Everyone is born to die, but in Kerouac’s familial discourse, this becomes an implicated perspective early on and often. Despite the child’s innocence, he too must suffer from “mortal damnation,” and he is “all eyes” about his fate. Jackie, then, becomes the seer of the novel, and what he sees becomes a repetitive glance into the uncanny experience of death itself. Despite Kerouac’s celebration of childhood innocence, his own narrator must suffer the knowledge of the other side, and his family directly translates this knowledge to him. The author communicates that

“Little booble-face laughs, plays in the street, knows no different— Yet my father warned me for years, it’s a dirty snaky deal with a fancy name—called L-I-F-E-more likely H-Y-P-E ... How rotten the walls of life do get-how collapsed the tendon beam...” (*Dr. Sax* 77). Kerouac suggests that there is no other meaning than the eventual outcome, and the “snaky deal” of growing up and witnessing the uncanny double of death becomes the primary tension for the narrator as a result.

In Book Four, “The Night the Man with the Watermelon Died,” Kerouac describes the childhood experience of watching a man die while walking with his mother on a bridge. The bridge setting is itself significant, a liminal borderland where the narrator witness the man pass from one state into another over the river that continues to provide an important symbolic propensity for the novel. The narrator recalls:

A man carrying a watermelon passed us ... he was just on the boards of the bridge ... rewarded by the bridge of eve and sighs of stone-the great massive charge of the ever stationary ever yearning cataracts and ghosts ... We stroll on behind him talking about the mysteries of life (inspired we were by moon and river), I remember I was so happy.... Suddenly the man fell, we heard the great thump of his watermelon on wood planks and saw him fallen ... I got there I saw the watermelon man staring at the waves below with shining eyes (“*Il’s meurt*, he’s dying,” my mother’s saying) and I see him breathing hard, feeble-bodied ... I’m completely terrified and yet I feel the profound pull and turn to see what he is staring at so deadly-earnest with his froth stiffness-I look down with him and there is the moon on shiny froth and rocks, there is the long eternity we have been seeking. (*Dr. Sax* 127-8)

Just as the river signifies the birth of the author, so too does the water mark the passing of the stranger on the Moody Street bridge. The river, as a symbol of eternal flow from one state to another, becomes the source for both life and death.

Like Goethe’s angels, Kerouac utilizes the image of the flower to mark this passing. He writes after watching the man pass on that “I shuddered and saw white

flowers and grew cold” (*Dr. Sax* 129). Soon after, the death of the watermelon man becomes doubled as an experience of his own family home. After witnessing the stranger’s death, Jackie and his mother get home, and the narrator remembers, “*the smell of flowers the day before somebody dies*—the night Gerard died and all the weeping ... the constant fear I had that either or both of my parents would die ... this mere thought was all I needed to know death.... it always is true, you smell the flowers before someone dies” (*Dr. Sax* 145-8). Jackie’s repetitive impulse to associate flowers with the arrival of death marks one way in which he enacts the uncanny double. The stranger on the bridge ratifies a way in which the ghost of Gerard is performed as both deaths are linked by flowers. These flowers become a symbol of death, but also like Goethe’s angels strewing roses, a ritualized performance of personal salvation.

Soon enough, Jackie must come to grips with his own relationship with the river that marked his creation and which signifies the danger of his own demise. As a transitory symbol of existence, the Merrimac River’s flood of 1936 marks a defining point of growing up for the narrator. The river takes over the town, and Jackie must admit the end of his own childhood innocence. He states of himself and his boyhood friends that “We felt we’d grown up because these places and scenes were now more than child’s play, they were now abluted in pure day by the white snow mist of tragedy” (*Dr. Sax* 166). As a spatial-temporal metaphor of Jackie’s conscious, the river signifies that time itself has stopped. The river causes to show “the great clock of City Hall rounded golden silent in the dumb daylight and said the time about the flood.... The clock drowned” (178-9). So too does Jackie’s innocence “drown” as a result of the river’s flooding. He has met the moment of IT, but unlike in *On the Road*, Kerouac’s

conception of this stopping point is a moment of the uncanny rather than some blissful spontaneous happening. For death, as an arrest of time, marks the delusion of knowable existence itself. If time itself can collapse as a result of the river's flow, than surely Jackie too must face the fact that we are all here to go. The flood also marks the end of Jackie's civilization, and he must admit that the struggle of humankind vs. nature is ultimately futile. He begrudges of the time that came before the flood that it is "something that can't possibly come back again in America and history, the gloom of the unaccomplished mudheap civilization when it gets caught with its pants down from a source it long lost contact with ... natural phenomena" (180). Ultimately it is Jackie who must come into contact with this natural phenomenon, and he has to do so face-to-face.

In *Dr. Sax*, Kerouac often utilizes the trope of the river to express the primordial power of evil itself. Thus, the snake and river become interchangeable at times, where in young Jackie's imagination he sees the flooding river as an "evil monster bent on devouring everyone" (*Dr. Sax* 179). Eventually, Jackie must come to grips with the fact that this monster not only comes for his town in the form of the river or for his brother in the form of death, but for himself. Nowhere in the novel does this become more prominent than when he and Dr. Sax are storming the castle to kill the snake. Dr. Sax directs Jackie to look down into a pit in the castle to see for the first time the Great World Snake. Kerouac relays:

'Do ye see those two lakes?' cried Doctor Sax... 'Yes sir.' I could see two distant lakes or ponds sitting way below in the dark of the pit as if we were looking down through a telescope at a planet with lakes—and I saw a thin river below the lakes, flicking softly, in a far glow—the whole thing mounted on a land hump like a rock mountain, strangely, familiarly shaped.... 'The lakes, the lakes!' screamed Sax ... 'those be his eyes!'

'The river, the river!'.... 'that be his mouth!'.... The face of Satan stares you back, a huge and mookish thing, fool!' (225-6)

Despite Jack's surprise at the enormity of the evil that they are facing, it is something also strangely familiar. An uncanny realization that he has somehow been here before, an acknowledgment of the river vision that starts in his own familial home at the moment of his very creation. Soon, the narrator realizes that this river/snake is also meant to signify his end. The narrator reports, "I found myself looking into the horror, into the void, I found myself looking into the Dark, I found myself looking into IT, I found myself compelled to fall. *The Snake was coming for me!!* (238). As a signification of time stopping, IT now represents a fall from grace, the stopping point where Jackie must wrest his very own mortality. Kerouac's *deja vu* moment of IT admits the flip side of its temporal ontology, where IT becomes not a moment of becoming but of collapsing.

That Dr. Sax is the interlocutor of the harbinger of death also becomes an important surrogate double of Kerouac's familial discourse. Dr. Sax becomes Gerard's alter ego, as when he first sees the dark hero. Kerouac writes, "Doctor Sax I first saw in his earlier lineaments in...Centraville—deaths, funerals, the shroud of that, the dark figure in the corner when you look at the dead man coffin in the dolorous parlor." Immediately after, Kerouac admits, "Gerard haunted" his childhood (*Dr. Sax* 4-5). Later, the author makes this transference even more explicit as it relates to the familial home itself. He writes:

On Beaulieu St. our house was built over an ancient cemetery...My brother Gerard was of the conviction, ark, that the ghosts of the dead beneath the house were responsible for its sometimes rattling—and crashing plaster, knocking pickaninny Irish dolls from the shelf. In darkness in mid-sleep night I saw him standing over my crib with wild hair, my heart stoned, I turned horrified, my mother and sister were sleeping in big bed, I was in crib, implacable stood Gerard-O my

brother...it might have been the arrangement of the shadows. –Ah
Shadow! Sax! (35)

Even before his brother has died then, the author's imagination aligns the memory of Gerard into what would eventually become the character Dr. Sax. The figure thus becomes the embodiment of ghostly memory.

In his essay, "Mourning Speech: Haunting and the Spectral Voices of Nine-Eleven," Joshua Gunn asserts that "ghosts function to remind us of something absent" (92). Despite the uncanny fear that he associates Dr. Sax with the death and haunting of his brother, Dr. Sax eventually replaces Gerard as Kerouac's boyhood pal and source of familial love. He becomes an uncanny double that Kerouac would continue to supplement over the course of other novels such as in his fetishization of Neal Cassady, another metaphoric "brother." In the novel, the narrator confers that Dr. Sax "didn't frighten me, either. I sensed he was my friend ... my old, old friend ... my ghost, personal angel, private shadow, secret lover" (*Dr. Sax* 33-4). In this sense, Dr. Sax becomes one in a long list of androgynous loves of the prepubescent Jackie. Later Kerouac shows this transference with another boyhood friend named Ernie Malo. He writes, "it was a real love affair at eleven ... at Gerard's picture I said my prayers and prayed for Ernie's love. Gerard made no move in the photo. Ernie was very beautiful to my eyes—it was before I began to distinguish between sexes—as noble and beautiful as a young nun" (73). Despite his attempt at such "noble" repetitive transfers, it is Dr. Sax and his sense of the uncanny double that eventually reigns as Gerard's alter ego. Just as Gerard implemented young Jackie's knowledge of haunting in his childhood crib, so too does Sax become the mediator of haunting for Jackie as a young child.

In Book Six, “The Castle,” Sax and Jackie roam the Lowell night, stopping intermittently at neighborhood houses until they reach Jackie’s home. Jackie describes the house, “the lights of which, on Saturday night, were now tragically dark, I knew there was something wrong. There is nothing worse than the great weeping face of houses, a family house, in the mid night.” Dr. Sax interjects, “you won’t know you ever suffered such sweet wishes—in your death you’ll know the *death* part of your life” (*Dr. Sax* 203-4). Sax’s soliloquy admonishes Jackie to recognize that despite his familial haunting, dying is an inevitable part of life. In his own death he will recognize this fact, but in the mean time, Sax reproaches Jackie to recognize the redemptive power of his own imagination. Again and again, Sax speaks in the lyric mode to divert Jackie’s attention to the power of poetic personal experience. In one of his longest speeches to young Jackie he states:

“You’ll come to when you lean your face over the nose will fall with it—that is known as death. You’ll come to angular rages and lonely romages among the Beast of Day ... that is known as Civilization. You’ll roll your feet together in the tense befuddles of ten thousand evening in company in the parlor ... that is known as, ah, socializing. You’ll grow numb all over from inner paralytic thoughts, and bad chairs,—that is know as Solitude.... You’ll look at a wall of blank flesh and fritter to explain yourself—that is known as Love. The flesh of your head will recede from the bone...that is known as old age, for which they have benefits. Bye and bye you’ll rise to the sun and propel your mean bones ... that is known as Maturity—but you’ll never be as happy as you are now in your quiltish innocent book-devouring boyhood immortal night.” (202-03)

Despite the forbearance of the knowledge of death gained in maturity, Sax uses his poetic voice to persuade Jackie to use his own. Only by use of his imagination will Jackie be able to counter the inevitability of death. The author utilizes the voice of Sax to promote the poetic imagination as a repository of personal autonomy. Instead of shuddering in the face of the uncanny aesthetic, Kerouac utilizes it to reproach his own childhood and

familial imagination. Jackie Duloz and Kerouac become simpatico as the former gains knowledge of the poetic voice while the latter utilizes it in the form of his performative writing.

“Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?”

Jackie’s “innocent book-devouring boyhood” subscribes to another important discourse operating within the novel and its use of the popular imagination. Ulmer writes of entertainment discourse that “The discourse learned is that of cultural mythology encountered in popular genres (Westerns, film noir, romances) carried through the media—television, cinema, newspapers, magazines, advertising” (*Teletheory* 295). Entertainment discourse is learned early on, as the initiation of media in the home provide the ruling values of society found in various outlets such as radio and television. As an amendment to the career and family discourse operating within the novel, Kerouac provides entertainment discourse to embellish upon the character of Dr. Sax. While the scenario of Goethe’s *Faust* provides a highbrow trajectory for the novel, Kerouac’s use of entertainment discourse offers his own lowbrow influences found within popular culture.

Fiona Paton asserts that it was because of the popular voice that the Beats became contested in postwar literary circles. She writes that during this time, “For the ... intellectuals, popular culture was either an embarrassing by-product that could never be flushed away, or it was a ‘spreading ooze’ of political domination.... For the Beats, on the other hand, popular culture represented the national heritage that their literary fathers continued rather desperately to seek” (“Beyond” 182). While still reverent to certain European influences, Kerouac and the Beats were also trying to carve out their own national literary niche. In “Aftermath: The Philosophy of the Beat Generation,” Kerouac

writes that he and the Beats were “prophesying a new style for American culture, a new style (we thought) completely free from European influences (unlike the Lost Generation), a new incantation” (47). To fulfill this new incantation in *Dr. Sax*, Kerouac drew upon entertainment discourse as a necessary part of the national literary landscape. Paton goes even further, explaining that “*Doctor Sax* directly challenges the elitism of the...intellectuals by upholding popular culture as an essential characteristic, perhaps the defining characteristic, of America’s cultural heritage” (“Beyond” 188). Kerouac shows the breadth of his literary influences early on in a letter written in 1942 aboard a ship while serving in the merchant marine. In it he writes, “I am in a most poetic mood. I’m studying like mad on this ship—*Outline of History*, the Roman writers, some classics, Thomas Mann (what a Humanist!), and *The Shadow* magazine” (*Letters* 1940 26).

As a set of instructions that transitions between family and entertainment discourses, Ulmer directs that Mystory practitioners should:

connect your Family memories and the Entertainment narrative. The connection will most likely not be literal, but figurative. The mystory forms what Roland Barthes called a ‘structural portrait’: the relationship between you and the narrative is that of a proportional ratio. Your position in your family is analogous to the position of the character to his/her diegetic world. The idea is to map one story onto the other. (*Internet* 127)

After establishing the uncanny nature of his familial childhood, this is precisely what Kerouac does. What he needed was a character as mysterious as his own boyhood imagination, a character that could operate betwixt and between the worlds of life and death that his own childhood eyes saw. He needed to look no further than the character from the pulp magazine he first read and heard in childhood, and later returned to while

at sea with the merchant marine. This character, the Shadow, provides the centering point of the entertainment discourse that thrives within the novel *Dr. Sax*.

In 1930 magazine publishers Street and Smith decided to use the new technological invention of radio to advertise interest in their pulp magazines. That year, they began sponsoring the “Detective Story Hour,” which highlighted a story from a magazine that would be put on the newsstands the next day. As a way of churning interest, a narrator was introduced by the name of “The Shadow.” This narrator became instantly adored, with his signature “Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows...” heard eerily in thousands of homes across the country. Street and Smith quickly devised a vehicle for the Shadow to star in his own pulp magazine as the narrator trumped the popularity of the work he was introducing. Walter Gibson became the primary writer of *The Shadow* magazine, a run that lasted from 1931 to 1949. Gibson describes the first issue, titled *The Living Shadow*, that it “introduced The Shadow as a somewhat nebulous figure who moved in and out of the story in such an uncanny fashion that people who encountered him—be they friend or foe—automatically spoke of him as ‘The Shadow’” (6). The Shadow is a crime fighter, draped in black and slouch hat, and he himself possesses a double in the form of his alter ego Lamont Cranston. *The Shadow* became a huge hit, and in 1932 he became the star of his own radio show, a run that lasted till 1954. Orson Welles became the voice of the Shadow in 1937, and as a mark of its popularity, the radio show possessed a 39% share of the New York radio audience in 1943 (Gibson 80). As a performance commodity the Shadow would later be introduced in a comic serial run as well as in feature films.

John Peters provides a possible reason for the Shadow's success and why Kerouac might have chosen him to be his spectral messenger. He conceptualizes of early radio that "A few genres...played radio's uncanny potential to the hilt. The Shadow knew that under commercial broadcasting's carefully wrought artifice of intimate familiarity lurked the loneliness of the long gaps, the eerie calls of distant voices" (218). Despite early radio's attempt to promote a sense of connection in the form of liveness (FDR's fire-side "chats"), the Shadow reminded the audience of the new technology's disembodiment, the familiarity of the voice made strange. The Shadow is a unique American invention, reflecting both the archive and the repertoire of performance, and Kerouac utilizes him in his novel as an invention reflecting his own performative turn in the spontaneous prose of *Dr. Sax*.

Kerouac provides the details of his initiation into the world of the Shadow discourse through Jackie's uncanny perceptions. Jackie describes the candy store where he buys the magazine, "I was mystified and horrified as if in an opium den.... The dens I imagined from *The Shadow* magazines that I bought there.... buying *Shadows* at Old Leper's candy store had that mixed quality of ... old dumb brown tragedy in it" (*Dr. Sax* 15). *The Shadow* represents young Jackie's life, and he participates in the entertainment discourse with the fervency of ritual. He describes his weekend encounters, "On Saturday night I was settling down alone in the house with magazines, reading *Doc Savage* or the *Phantom Detective* with his masky rainy night— *The Shadow Magazine* I saved for Friday nights, Saturday morning was always the world of gold and rich sunlight" (72). In Jackie's universe, *The Shadow* is the opposite of this gold and rich sunlight, a performance he reserved for the dark and mystery of Friday nights.

When Jackie does see Dr. Sax he is painted with the same aesthetic qualities of *The Shadow* magazine's dark hero. Kerouac tries to retrieve the scenario of sensory expression of the pulp and radio hero in the repertoire of imagination. He writes:

Doctor Sax hides around the corner of my mind. SCENE: A masked by night shadow flitting over the edge of the sandbank. SOUND: A dog barking half a mile away; and river. SMELL: Sweet sand and dew. TEMPERATURE: Summer midnight frost. MONTH: Late August, ballgame's over.... SUPPOSITION: Doctor Sax has just disappeared over the sandbank and's gone home to bed. (*Dr. Sax* 11)

Both the Shadow and Sax share the same appearance, possessing hawkish noses and furious eyes while mediating the same dark laugh. They even possess the same hero gadgets, producing rubber boats from hats and scaling walls with the help of suction cups. As Jackie puts it, "Doctor Sax was like The Shadow when I was young, I saw him leap over the last bush on the sandbank one night, cape a-flying" and later, even more transparently, "it might have been the arrangement of the shadows. –Ah Shadow! Sax! (33; 35). By producing this latter utterance, Kerouac emphasizes the fictional quality of the character for both his readers and for the narrator. Dr. Sax is a figment of the entertainment discourse from which he is aroused, and Kerouac thus "undermines one of the crucial aspects of fantasy literature—that its alternative world be consistently maintained" (Paton, "Reconceiving" 137). In doing so Kerouac rhetorically points to not only the content but also the form of the pulp genre from which he parodies.

In his journal Kerouac writes that he "Decided perhaps the best way to do 'Doctor Sax' is on a kind of 'higher' Al Capp 'kick' (Brinkley 167). Al Capp was the creator of the comic strip *L'il Abner*, and Kerouac shows another popular source from which he was producing his fiction. In *Dr. Sax*, Kerouac uses some of the same comic tools to produce his literature. He describes the evil vampire Count Condu:

The Count was tall, thin, hawk-nosed, caped, whitegloved, glint eyed, sardonic, the hero of Doctor Sax whose shaggy eyebrows made him so blind he could hardly see what he was doing hopping over the dump at night—Condu was sibilant, sharp-tongued, aristocratic, snappy, mawk-mouthed like a bloodless simp, mowurpy with his mush-lips swelled inbent and dommer-fall as if with a little hanging Mandarin mustache which he didn't have—(*Dr. Sax* 22-3).

Such passages point to the grotesque tradition of comic strips. Paton lists the similarities as a focus on “distortions, caricature, and overstatement, incongruity, unnaturalness, and ugliness...Comic strip artists often simplify and exaggerate one aspect of physical appearance” (“Reconceiving” 131). In his description of Count Condu, Kerouac focuses on the Count's mouth, providing a grotesque image of the vampire's mythological source of domination. Kerouac's use of the comic genre also allows him to play around with linguistic neologisms, a practice well known within the comic strip tradition (Paton, “Beyond” 186). Later in the novel, when Kerouac provides Dr. Sax's own writing, he further quotes from the grotesque tradition in parodying the pulp fiction's propensity towards repetition. Sax describes himself that “His eyes were emerald green, and they flashed at the sight of her.” On the next page he utilizes the same language, stating that “His countenance was purplish, he had red hair and red eyebrows, his eyes were fierce green and they flashed with joy” (140, 141). Sax is, after all, no “sophisticated writer.” Despite this, the comic and pulp entertainment voice from which he draws is ultimately celebrated because it taps into the poetic imagination of the child.

Being immersed into the comic and pulp discourse from which he sprang, it is only Jackie who is able to lay his eyes on Dr. Sax. Sax's performance becomes a contagion for young Jackie as he imitates his boyhood hero. He reports, “‘Moo-hoo-hoo-ha-ha-ha’ came the long, hollow, sepulchral sound of triumphant Doctor Sax's profound

and hidden laughter. I made my own cackle-laugh, with hands cupped, in the excruciatingly exciting dark shadows of Saturday night” (*Dr. Sax* 199). Earlier this contagion was found in Jackie’s role as the Black Thief where only after he is caught does he wonder the consequence of his imagination. He asks, ““What foolish power had I discovered and been possessed by?” I asts meself.... My mother said exasperated: ‘I’m going to stop you from reading them damned Thrilling Magazines if it’s the last thing I do....’” (49-50). Jackie has been possessed, caught the bug as it were, of acting like Sax. In his performance of the Black Thief, Kerouac shows the transition of the archive into the embodiment of the repertoire. Both are ultimately celebrated, as it is the archive as found in the literary pages of *The Shadow* and *Faust* that inspire Jackie’s repertory imagination. Sax himself celebrates the literary imagination after watching Jackie meditating on a sandbank. He admonishes Jackie that ““Staring with mute sun eyes were you at the drop of day in your billygoat town—think old men ain’t traveled and seen other shepherds ... You didn’t read a book today, did you, about the power of drawing a circle in the earth at night—you just stood here at nightfall with your mouth hanging open and fisting your entrail piece—”” (193). Jackie protests, but ultimately succumbs to Dr. Sax’s pronouncement celebrating the literary imagination. Then, in a sequence where Kerouac encapsulates one entertainment onto another an important transition takes place. The narrator reports that Sax “pulled out a mask of W.C. Fields with David Copperfield Mr. Swiggins hat and put it over the black part where his face was under the slouch hat. I gaped,-- When I’d first heard the rustle of the bushes I thought it was The Shadow. AT THAT MOMENT I KNEW that Doctor Sax was my friend” (193-4). In this section Kerouac points out the importance of the oral tradition in relation to the character of The

Shadow/Sax by means of the mask of W.C. Fields. Before his film career, Fields was a vaudeville performer known for his spontaneous phrasing, “delivered either in the inspired flow of stage monologue or issued as rebuke to an unruly member of the audience” (Shapcott 235). By holding up the symbolic mask, Dr. Sax transitions from a character tied to the archive to one inspired by spontaneous orality, as he himself rebukes Jackie as a member of his audience by means of poetic monologue.

Earlier Kerouac foreshadows this masked transformation in his familiar symbolic playground of the redbrick neon. He writes, “THERE WAS AN ALLEY DOWNTOWN among the soft redbrick ... in it the living W.C. Field had walked, headed from a rainy afternoon stint in the 6-act Vod Bill (with gaping masks ha-ha)” (*Dr. Sax* 110). For all the entertainment characters live in the shadows of Kerouac’s mind, where the red neon of imagination meets the cold hard bricks of reality. In between is the space for play, and Kerouac further articulates the symbology by superimposing the uncanny double of entertainment discourse onto that of his family. He writes, “The mystery of the Lowell night extends to the heart of downtown, it lurks in the shadows of the redbrick walls ... The Shadow creeps,--the ghosts of W.C. Fields and my father emerge together from the redbrick alley, straw be-hatted, headed for the lit-up blackwalls of the night of the cross eyed cat, as Sax grins....” (113). Haunting starts early at home, and Kerouac articulates his childhood entertainment discourse into that of his hometown and his lost father, a specter that would continue to play aesthetically over the course of his literary career.

There is one more entertainment discourse that plays heavily into *Dr. Sax* as well. Book Two, “A Gloomy Bookmovie,” is dedicated to Kerouac’s ongoing experimentation of weaving film motifs into literary writing. From the outset of the Book’s title, Kerouac

announces its affinity to the uncanny aesthetic he has been making with that of his familial discourse. In the Book, Kerouac utilizes familiar directorial tools to show the montage sequencing of its twenty-five separate “scenes.” There is the long-shot:

Look up, the huge tree of Sarah Avenue ... (it ran clear to long white concrete garage) and mushroomed into the sky with limb-spreads that o’ertopped many roofs in the neighborhood and did so without particularly touching any of em...the tree drips down huge drops, it rears up and away in an eternity of trees, in its own flambastic sky-- (*Dr. Sax* 82-3)

The medium shot:

TWO O’CLOCK—strange—thunder and the yellow walls of my mother’s kitchen with the green electric clock, the round table in the middle, the stove, the great twenties castiron stove now only used to put things on next to the modern thirties green gas stove upon which so many succulent meals and flaky huge gently apple pies have been hot, whee—(Sarah Avenue House). (*Dr. Sax* 81).

In the following, Kerouac produces a dolly shot while moving in for the close-up:

The brown picture on the wall was done by some old Italian who has long since faded from my parochial school textbooks ... But see close, my face now in the window of the Sarah Avenue house ... my face looking out through dew-drops of the rain from within, the gloomy special brown Technicolor interior of my house ... (I wore no Dick Tracy badges ever, I was a proud professional of the Shades with my Shadow & Sax) (*Dr. Sax* 82)

Jackie’s house is mood lighted especially for its uncanny appeal, and his announcement that he is a “proud professional of the Shades” ties him with that of another popular genre of postwar American cinema.

Film noir was first coined by French critics who noticed the dark or black quality of American films made during the 1940s and ‘50s. It was a term that they derived from translations of American crime novels including Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, and Raymond Chandler (Mast and Kavin 295). This, and the role high-contrast and low-key lighting play in the genre to produce dark contrasts, make film noir a natural choice for

Kerouac to play upon the uncanny aesthetics operating within his novel. Sterritt explains that “dark in tone, fragmented in structure, labyrinthine in plot, and often assuming a complex and unconventional orientation in space ... and time.... These traits accord with ... such Kerouac works as *Doctor Sax*” (*Mad* 121). Sterritt’s short explanation of film noir could also function as a descriptor of the “Gloomy Bookmovie.” Kerouac uses the conventions of film noir to splice together the three intertextual narratives of Jackie at home with his mother, playing imaginary horse races, and the Shadow coming to Lowell to play a game of pool.

According to Louis Giannetti, film noir utilizes a style that depicts “a world of night and shadows.... The style is profuse in ... symbols of fragility, such as windowpanes.... Motifs of entrapment abound” (18). In Scene Two Kerouac utilizes these symbols early on to promote the uncanny potential of the Book’s “movie.” He begins with the voice of Jackie; “I’m at the window parlor facing Sarah Avenue ... looking at Sarah Avenue through the lace curtains and beaded windows, in the dank gloom by the vast blackness of the squareback piano and dark easy chairs” (*Dr. Sax* 81). Images like these abound, as Kerouac goes on to tell the mysterious story of the child hero at home. As a use of his spontaneous chronotope, Kerouac positions the telling of his bookmovie as if it were occurring now. In scene eleven he writes, “Thunder again, now you see my room ... You hear my footsteps unmistakably pounding up the stairs on the run” (85). In scene twenty-one Kerouac cross-cuts from a scene of Jackie playing pool in his haunted room where he plays as the Shadow to the “actual” Shadow entering the local Social Club to shoot pool. He paints the scene with by now familiar contrasting colors, writing, “And in fact this is what we see now, The Shadow St. Louis is coming

into the Social Club to shoot pool, wearing hat and long coat, somehow shadowy as he comes along the long plywood wall painted gray, light” (93). From here Jackie himself is transported to the scene, becoming the uncanny double of the Shadow himself. He reports, “The door opens quickly and out of the rain and in comes I, silent, swift, gliding in like The Shadow—sidling to the corner of the scene to watch, removing not coat nor budging, I’m already hung up on the scene’s awe” (96). Kerouac then cross-cuts once again to a scene where he is taking a Sunday drive with his father to see a horse race and a moment of uncanny repetition ensues. He writes, “In the fall of 1934 we took a grim voyage south in the rain to Rhode Island to see Time Supply win Narragansett Special ... a grim voyage, through exciting cities of great neons ... but something dark and rog-like.—*I had seen it before*” (97). Kerouac positions Jackie as the dark seer; his entertainment discourse melds into his familial role as Jackie and The Shadow become embedded with the same strange dark powers.

Despite its dark tones, the bookmovie is ultimately a celebration of childhood fantasy. We see Jackie being able to play with his imaginary friends, whether they are the Shadow or the marbles that he names after horses like Time Supply. The time is short, however, and Kerouac traces the genealogical implications of age and games where it becomes “father and son on separate toys, the toys get less friendly when you grow up” (*Dr. Sax* 97). Kerouac mourns here the loss of his childhood, its uncanny potential of allowing him to see the surreal world. He ends his movie, “God bless the children of this picture, this bookmovie. I’m going on into the Shade” (*Dr. Sax* 97). This bookmovie is a record of going into the “Shade,” as Kerouac provides yet another entertainment mask to perform his burgeoning prose. The use of entertainment discourses such as the Shadow,

W.C. Fields, and film noir are all active ways in which Kerouac tells his Mystory, not just as content of telling but also as a way of telling it. They become necessary means by which Kerouac is able to appropriate popular culture to help him develop and to do the inventive practice of spontaneous prose.

“I’ll be damned.... The Universe disposes of its own evil!”

Ulmer’s last category of the Mystory is community discourse and of it he explains that it constitutes “the history of one’s nation, state, or community.... This history represents the memory of the collectivity” (*Teletheory* 295). For Kerouac, the community discourse from which he constructs *Dr. Sax* is represented by his own unique boyhood home of Lowell and his French-Canadian Catholic heritage. Ulmer points to the spiritual power of community discourses, that “The ‘moral’ of the history narrated...convey[s] the ‘power,’ that is the values that the community promotes” (*Internet* 191). Kerouac would have a lifelong wrestling match with the Catholic dogma presented to him as a child. It is a discourse that he would be able to embrace eventually, appropriating its teachings to provide the label of the Beat generation itself. In “The Origins of the Beat Generation” he writes, “I went one afternoon to the church of my childhood (one of them), Ste. Jeanne d’Arc in Lowell, Mass., and suddenly with tears in my eyes and had a vision of what I must have really meant with ‘Beat’ anyhow when I heard the holy silence in the church ... the vision of the word Beat as being to mean beatific” (63). Here Kerouac refers to the beatitudes, the eight Christian prescriptions given by Christ as part of his Sermon on the Mount. In *Dr. Sax*, much like in his personal life, Kerouac interrogates the community discourse of his spiritual home, and he comes to grips with his own personal faith as a result.

Kerouac integrates community discourse from the novel's outset, as he writes on the first page: "Just before that I was coming down the hill between Gershom Avenue and that spectral street ... Leo Martin saying to Sonny Alberge or Joe Plouffe, '*Eh, batêge, ya faite un grand sarman s'foi icit*'—('Holy Batchism, he made a long sermon this time') (*Dr. Sax* 3). Throughout the novel Kerouac sprinkles in a healthy dose of the French joul that provided the ethnic sound of his childhood. But also in this quote we see the image of the specter once again, something Kerouac ties to the image of Catholicism itself. According to Ulmer, community discourse is represented as "the official version—as codified in textbooks.... People educated in alternative settings—homeschooled, religious or charter schools—may have learned a different version of the community history" (*Internet* 81). Indeed it is the spectral education that Kerouac's narrator achieves in the home and in his popular readings that provide the alternative version of the traditional Catholicism that governs his imagination.

Early in the novel the image of Catholicism itself is manifested in Jackie's world as a collision between his popular imagination and the religious artifacts that surround him. He states "Doctor Sax I first saw in his earlier lineaments in the early Catholic childhood of Centraville—deaths, funerals, the shroud of that, the dark figure in the corner when you look at the dead man coffin the dolorous parlor of the open house with a horrible purple wreath on the door" (*Dr. Sax* 4). Dr. Sax, based in part on the mythology of *The Shadow*, is also linked to the Catholic imagery that shrouds Jackie's imagination. Besides integrating the popular with his community discourse, Kerouac goes on to weave in his career discourse as represented by Goethe's roses with Catholicism as well. Describing his childhood home Jackie states, "We had a statue of Ste. Thérèse in my

house—on West Street I saw it turn its head at me—in the dark. Earlier, too, horrors of the Jesus Christ of passion play in his shrouds and vestments ... either He or the Virgin Mary stooped with phosphorescent profile and horror pushing my bed” (4). Early on then the images of Catholicism are a symbol of the uncanny; they represent the eventual suffering and passing that the narrator sees around him and that he too must eventually face as a mortal human being. But in this passage Kerouac foreshadows the eventual triumph of the narrator as well. St. Thérèse of Lisieux died in 1897, and on her deathbed she said, “After my death I will let fall a shower of roses” (Paton, “Reconceiving” 143). Being well schooled on the lives of the Saints, Kerouac refers to St. Thérèse and her symbolic use of roses as an integration of the Goethe symbol in *Faust* as well. The rose symbolizes the triumph over evil and death, something Jackie will eventually be able to accomplish with the help of Dr. Sax. When he puts the roses in his hair at the site of the grotto at the book’s conclusion, it is an integration of both his career and community discourses, a multi-vocal symbol that weaves its way throughout the novel.

Despite this eventual triumph, Catholicism and the community discourse of faith-based performance is construed as a form of haunting for the young narrator. He ties the church specifically to death, an uncanny compulsion where Sax, his brother, and the church are inevitably linked. Kerouac writes, “my whole death and Sax is wound in satin coffins ... I saw my brother in a satin coffin, he was nine ... what a thing to gape at—AND THROUGH ROTTING SATIN. I gave up the church to ease my horrors—too much candlelight, too much wax--” (*Dr. Sax* 66). For Kerouac, the familial discourse associated with the passing of his brother feeds into the community discourse of the church. Both are felt as a form of haunting, and Kerouac illustrates his sense of this curse

in a conversation with Jackie and his uncle Mike. He says to his nephew, “my child poor Ti Jean, do you know my dear that you are destined to be a man of big sadness and talent—it’ll never help to live or die, you’ll suffer like the others, *more*” and “O the poor Duluozes are all dying!—chained by God to pain—maybe to hell!” (118, 120).

Kerouac’s Duluoze family, at least in both Mike and Jackie’s eyes, is indeed cursed. The community discourse of God’s wrath, as integrated into and performed by the family, amalgamates this curse as if they are the ones chosen to bear its weight. This passage works on a meta-communicative level as well; despite his vast production as a writer, Kerouac himself was unable to achieve the respect he was seeking as a prose artist. He is, like his family, destined to suffer—but in his case, even more.

It is the weight of his perceived familial curse and the vast signs of haunting in Catholicism that propel Jackie to invent Dr. Sax as a spiritual substitute. According to Paton, “Sax takes on those horrors, but in a more manageable form. He is a mediating figure who both embodies the fear of darkness and death and offers protection from it” (“Reconceiving” 137). Kerouac provides Sax as mitigation between his narrator’s visions and the community discourse of Catholicism. In his introduction into the Catholic grotto setting Jackie states:

we’re in the Grotto!—deep, too,—halfway to the first Station of the Ghost.... Everything there was to remind of Death, and nothing in praise of life ... in all this Doctor Sax I knew, I saw him watching from a shroud in the bushes by the river ... I saw him flit across the moonlit rocks of the summer river to come and see the visitors in the Grotto.... I always liked to get out of there....(*Dr. Sax* 125-6)

Sax is Jackie’s interlocutor, providing another set of supernatural eyes that confirm the mystery of the baroque Catholic rituals for the narrator. Sax, too, is linked to supernatural protection, a kind of guardian angel that Kerouac aligns with Biblical

powers. Storming the castle with Dr. Sax to confront the snake, Jackie observes, “everything trembled to turn white.... Darkness shivered white. Ahead of me in snow white raiment Doctor Sax suddenly looked like an angel saint. Then suddenly he was a hooded angel in a white tree, and looked at me. I saw waterfalls of milk and honey, I saw gold. I heard Them singing. I trembled to see the halo pure” (*Dr. Sax* 223). Although Sax is an interlocutor of the community discourse that frightens Jackie, he too is enmeshed by the Catholic mysteries that reign in the novel’s consciousness.

These mysteries work on an allusion level as well, as Kerouac alludes to other saints’ works without explicitly tying them to the person herself as he does with St. Thérèse. There is the mystery of the castle itself, which provides the vortices of behavior that signals Kerouac’s vision of the snake’s residence and the scene of the book’s final climax. Jackie states of the castle that “Now more than ever I saw there were an infinite number of levels in the Castle” and that it eventually became known as “Snake Hill Castle ... because of the overabundance of small snakes and garter snakes to be found on that hill” (*Dr. Sax* 235, 132). Another Saint of the church suggests Kerouac’s vision of the castle as well. Paton offers that “Kerouac was ... thinking of Saint Teresa of Avila, the sixteenth-century Spanish Carmelite nun and Doctor of the Church represented so famously by Giovanni Bernini in *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*” (“Reconceiving” 144). Saint Teresa’s most influential work is *The Interior Castle*, a series of meditations where she compares the individual soul to the structure of a castle itself. In it she writes, “I began to think of the soul as if it were a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions” (28). Prayer and meditation lead one into the door of the castle, but accompanying the

individual as well is a host of other obstacles trying to block the path. According to the Saint's vision, "snakes and vipers and poisonous creatures" try to prevent the soul from reaching the interior of the castle, the place where God resides (40-41). By utilizing the idea of the infinite number of rooms in the castle as well as in its title of "Snake Hill," Kerouac aligns himself with the community discourse of the church mysteries taught to him from an early age.

The symbol of the snake itself is clearly one of the most Biblical references used in the novel. Kerouac makes the connection between the snake and the devil explicit when writing "The horrid stench of the ancient Snake has been growing in the world-ball like a worm in the apple since Adam and Eve broke down and cried" (*Dr. Sax* 228). Kerouac also goes beyond this simple connection itself by providing another cultural context for the snake's imagery. When the snake finally does appear in the novel, erupting from the depths of the castle itself, its "Milky white horror flowed in the air" (*Dr. Sax* 232). Paton marks this kind of imagery as a specific allusion to the anxieties of postwar America. She argues that it "conjures up images of a mushroom cloud" and she goes on to provide a reason why Kerouac may have been thinking about this imagery specifically in the year he wrote the novel, because "on April 22, 1952, the United States had exploded the largest atom bomb yet developed, an event not only covered by the newspapers but also televised" ("Beyond" 188). After the snake arrives in the form of a mushroom cloud Dr. Sax is powerless to eliminate it. The author's remedy is to rely on the community discourse that he had earlier denied.

Facing failure and doom as a result of the snake, the bird of paradise swoops in to cast the snake away. Kerouac describes that:

There in the blinding white sky of churchbells and wild disaster hung this huge black bird.... It was the Bird of Paradise coming to save mankind as the Snake upward protruded insinuating itself from the earth.... Nobody, not Sax, me, the Devil's assistant or the Devil himself could keep from seeing the.... Tortured earth, tortured snake, tortured evil.... As I looked up at that descending World of Bird I felt more fear than I've ever felt in all my life, infinitely worse than the fear when I saw the Snake....(*Dr. Sax* 242-3)

Here Kerouac refers to fear of God and the community discourse of Christianity that teaches that it is this fear, and not the fear of the devil, that should be the one ultimately obeyed. In the eyes of his child narrator, everything is resolved as a result of this escape from the apocalyptic scene. Even Dr. Sax, Jackie's interlocutor of Catholicism's dark passions, admits that "I'll be damned.... The Universe disposes of its own evil!" The universe, as governed by a higher spiritual power, takes care of itself ultimately, and both Jackie and Sax are freed as a result. Dr. Sax goes on to deal with only glee now, and Jackie returns to the Grotto, formerly a site of horror, to put roses in his hair and go home. His last line, "By God," represents his contention with the community discourse from which he had tried so desperately to counter.

As a post-script to the novel Kerouac adds yet another community discourse to frame the novel's conclusion. He writes, "Written in Mexico City, Tenochtitlan, 1952 Ancient Capital of Azteca" (*Dr. Sax* 245). Here, Kerouac refers to Aztec mythology and as it is still represented today in the form of the Mexican flag. Paton supplies that "According to Aztec legend, the vision of eagle with the serpent in its beak would indicate to the wandering Mexica where they should build their capital" ("Reconceiving" 147). Kerouac's homage to place in which he was writing the novel shows his integration of yet another community discourse, an integration that provides him another way to frame the novel not just as a personal story, but also as a spiritual alternative for

the community. His story is a story of a cultural collective, whether found in classical, popular, familial, or community discourses. The novel itself is his most optimistic, where he challenges and comes to accept the precepts of his faith. No wonder then that it was his personal favorite.

Conclusion

Dr. Sax represents the final step in the artistic expedition of Jack Kerouac's development and use of spontaneous prose. It is one of the few novels where Kerouac was able to commit to his performative voice, before fame and the ravages of alcohol would send him spiraling into the abyss of literary delusion. This chapter traced the creative forces of *Dr. Sax*, a novel where Kerouac for the first time is able to fuse his artistic imagination in both form and content. By utilizing the historiographical contribution of Diana Taylor's scenario and the literary theory of Gregory Ulmer's *Mystory*, I argued here that Kerouac produces his most successful use of spontaneous prose in *Dr. Sax*, as compared to both *On the Road* and *Visions of Cody*. By producing a narrative that sacrifices neither the story nor the voice in which it is spoken, Kerouac is able to communicate the doing of spontaneity in novel length fashion for the first time. According to Ulmer, *Mystory*'s "primary purpose ... is to help the composer articulate the ground of invention" (*Teletheory* 247). *Mystory* is used here then to articulate a more systematic understanding of Kerouac's inventive prose generally, and its expression in *Dr. Sax* specifically. It is in the function of *Mystory*'s inventive capacity that helps articulate how spontaneous prose works as a discourse of personal and communal discovery.

According to Ulmer, Mystory's voice constitutes "that of the group (collective) in me" (*Teletheory* 290). Accordingly, Ulmer offers four categories of Mystory discourse: career, family, entertainment, and the community to show how each function in lieu of one another. Mystory is written in the simultaneity of these discourses at any given time. By drawing upon career discourse and Taylor's conception of the performance scenario, it is argued here that Kerouac's reverential tie-in to Goethe's *Faust* is utilized to achieve a performative update. Both the archive and the repertoire of this literary classic allow Kerouac a means by which he achieves sophistication to the post-literary aims of his spontaneous prose. In addition, the scenario of this gothic tradition allows him to return once again to the symbol of the ghost, a symbolic mainstay of the novel. The autobiographical impetus of the death of his brother Gerard provides Kerouac the performance of the uncanny operating within the memory and dream of *Dr. Sax's* aesthetics. According to Royle, "The uncanny is never simply a question of a statement, description or definition, but always engages a performative dimension, a maddening supplement, something unpredictable and *additionally strange* happening in and to what is being stated, described or defined" (16). To provide this function of the uncanny aesthetic Kerouac provides the figure of Dr. Sax/The Shadow to map another discourse onto the uncanny one provided by his family.

The popular literary tradition of the U.S. is performed as another distinct influence, something Kerouac distinguished as being part of what it meant to be Beat itself. In "The Origins of the Beat Generation" he writes that the:

Beat Generation goes back.... to the wild and raving childhood of playing the Shadow...and our fathers wore straw hats like W.C. Fields. It goes back to the completely senseless babble of the Three Stooges.... It goes back to the inky ditties of old cartoons.... to Lamont Cranston so cool and

sure suddenly becoming the frantic Shadow going mwee hee hee ha ha in the alley of New York imagination.... To Joan Crawford her raw shanks in the fog.... Like my grandfather this America was invested with wild selfbelieving individuality and this had begun to disappear around the end of World War II with so many great guys dead ... when suddenly it began to emerge again....(57-9)

Kerouac's sense of identity is itself performed via the doing of the popular imagination, and in *Dr. Sax* he utilizes popular culture as a means of marking his own sense of national and individual identity. The interrogation of Catholic dogma shows itself to be another discourse further enmeshed into that of the uncanny aesthetic operating consistently over the course of the novel. Kerouac weaves its spectral rituals and signs into ones already provided for him in his career, family, and entertainment discourses, and at the end he provides a sense of hope that many of his other novels lack.

According to Ulmer, one of the effects of the *Mystory* project is the sense of discovery a writer receives as a result of dialogizing its discourses. He writes that "The surprise it produces in the writer first of all is the ... equivalent of the uncanny, marking the place of the inmixing of self and other in the unconscious" (*Teletheory* 120).

Although this chapter has explored Kerouac's use of discourses topically as supplied by Ulmer's categories, the enmeshment of these discourses must be emphasized. Kerouac's use of spontaneous prose often times lends itself to writing via separate voices in tandem. For example, in *Dr. Sax* he writes:

So I began to see the ghost of Zap Plouffe mixed with other shrouds when I walked home from Destouches' brown store with my *Shadow* in my arm. I wanted to face my duty—I had learned to stop crying in Pawtucketville (in Centraville it was Ste. Thérèse and her turning plaster head, the crouching Jesus, visions of French or Catholic or Family Ghosts ... you know some old gray ash-faced dead ghost is waxing his profile to candlelight and suffocating flowers in the broon-gloom of dead relatives kneeling in a chant and the son of the house is wearing a black suit Ah Me! ... what phantom is pursuing *you?*). Doctor Sax had knowledge of

death ... but he was a mad fool of power, a Faustian man, no true
Faustian's afraid of the dark—only Fellaheen—and Gothic Stone
Cathedral Catholic of Bats and Bach Organs in the Blue Mid Night Mists
of Skull, Blood, Dust, Iron, Rain burrowing into earth to snake antique.
(*Dr. Sax* 43)

In this sketch, Kerouac provides the symbol of the ghost as his jewel center of interest. From its inference, Kerouac produces the flow of all the separate discourses from which he interrogates the overarching interest of the specter. The *Shadow*, family deaths, Goethe's *Faust*, and the Catholic images of his childhood all inform his interest in the uncanny symbol of the ghost. But far from being nonsensical, Kerouac's use of spontaneous prose is articulated here by a systematic appreciation of intertextual foci.

Here, too, Kerouac shows his interest in going beyond a mere speculative investigation of autobiographical interest. According to Ulmer the Mystory project is different every time, according to the separate discourse subjects utilized by the writer. He writes that Mystory generally is “valuable only to the extent that it encourages others to turn to their own archives—as a relay and not as a model” (*Teletheory* 247).

Kerouac's *Dr. Sax* is itself a cultural relay, as it incorporates not only his story but also the story of collective national, ethnic, literary, and spiritual identities. It is the story of pre- and postwar America, the haunting of a personal and collective history. “What phantom is pursuing *you*?” provides his cultural relay, a moment where Kerouac invites his audience to think of their own mystoriographical project. In this question—or dare—Kerouac opens up the scope of tracing the specter of history and his multi-faceted sense of identity. Here and in other writing he also opens up a means for understanding the achievement of his spontaneous prose. Spontaneous prose viewed as Mystory, as performative writing, shows us that a mode of expression belongs to no one individual,

and so the general critical fixation on Kerouac's life is somewhat misplaced.

Spontaneous prose was wrought instead, as a relay of the collective mind. Hopefully, as a result of focusing beyond his biography and looking at how Kerouac's performative writing works, his readers too can contribute to both the archive and the repertoire of its imagination.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

The purpose of this study has been to reconsider two fictions operating within the study of Jack Kerouac's spontaneous prose. The first fiction approaches the mythos surrounding Kerouac's writing method. By means of historiographical evidence, I argued that Kerouac's spontaneous prose is much more complicated than the transparent labels that are often times leveled at it by critics and fans alike. Kerouac's novels prove to be much more than just "typing" and, on the other side of the coin, he himself was no solitary genius. The speed at which he sometimes wrote produces a false image of the author banging on a typewriter at all hours of the night, a kind of literary rebel who worked without interference from the culture in which he resided. Far from the fiction that usually accompanies this mythology, Kerouac was very much a part of the cultural moment in which he resided. His writing method produced work that was both influenced by and was influential to other artists, as well as the general culture in which it is situated. To put this first fiction to rest, the emphasis of this study has been to focus on the fictional work of Jack Kerouac rather than on the biographical life of the man. By focusing on the author's work rather than on his life, my hope has been to explicate the importance of the former rather than the latter. Due to the importance placed on the autobiographical nature of his fiction, Kerouac the author has largely been coopted by Kerouac the character.

To critique and analyze these fictions, this study has tracked the birth and dissemination of Kerouac's spontaneous prose by means of performance genealogy. From 1950 to 1953, Kerouac both discovered and utilized his newfound writing method, and my approach has been to follow its trajectory over the course of three performances

of the novel. Beginning with his essay “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose,” and followed by a critique of *On the Road*, *Visions of Cody*, and *Doctor Sax*, Kerouac’s writing method is evaluated to judge the relative success the author had in implementing the performative writing goals he set for himself.

Following my introductory chapter, I offer an introduction to and critical assessment of Kerouac’s performative writing principles as they were outlined in his essay, “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose.” In this essay, Kerouac provides his own felicity conditions regarding what spontaneous prose means and, as an approach to performative writing, what it does. Two main approaches are granted, the first being his approach to sketching, where the artist works by means of a definitive subject and the free association of its deliberation. The second is his approach to timing, by which Kerouac works in the “now” to produce a writing that works to build upon vertical associations rather than on traditional horizontal arrangements. Furthermore, I argued that the essay itself is an important cultural artifact, one that serves as a pedagogical synecdoche for much of the postwar U.S. American avant-garde as a whole. Kerouac’s essay provides the genealogical mask by which other artistic genres found in art, music, and acting can be understood to be operating within the same spontaneous insurgency in postwar America.

Chapter Three begins the process of evaluating the successes and failures of Kerouac’s implementation of his spontaneous prose method. Approaching the canonical text of *On the Road*, I argue that Kerouac has only begun to implement the felicity conditions he addresses in “Essentials.” The novel is best understood as a record of spontaneous subjects rather than an implementation of spontaneity in form. As a record

of its performance shows, Kerouac's novel of liminality is an updated version of two literary genealogies. The first, picaresque narrative, provides Kerouac the framework by which his characters live according to the adventure time of the novel, and this temporal arrangement also provides the spatial diversity from which his characters operate. The second literary gene that Kerouac updates is the American romance tradition, one that provides the performative identity subjects he explores in the novel. These include the West, race, and the cultural haunting of personal and collective patriarchy. As it is seen over the course of the novel, Kerouac's main characters Sal and Dean are never able to achieve any lasting personal transformations, and they are in fact stuck in the liminoid condition in which they reside. On a meta-communicative level as well, *On the Road* itself is never able to achieve any lasting practice of the felicity conditions of sketching and timing that the author views as essential to his method.

Chapter Four thus takes up the case for *Visions of Cody*, the novel written directly after *On the Road* and one that treats the same subject material but in a vastly different form. Kerouac's *Visions* represent his postmodern turn and the various limits of his spontaneous prose method. To explicate the resources of his turn towards performative writing, the novel is explained as a form of post-literacy and as an ontological exploration of narrative form itself. The chapter traces the various competing discourses of the novel, a vast range that includes his failed attempts at verisimilitude transcription and free-flowing automatism. The analysis goes on to explain the sections where Kerouac is the most successful, providing a model for the unanswerable binary that exists between the ontology of performance and its mediatization. But as it stands within the larger argument of this study, *Visions of Cody* is shown to be a series of exercises rather than a

sustainable narrative. Whereas *On the Road* doesn't enact his turn towards performative writing, *Visions of Cody* often times puts the writing method on full tilt at expense of narrative storytelling.

To find the middle voice between these two extremes, Kerouac produces his most successful attempt at spontaneous prose in the novel *Doctor Sax*, the subject of Chapter Five. Within this novel, Kerouac is able to achieve what his two earlier novels had not, a holistic balance between form and story telling by means of performative writing.

Documenting the novel's middle voice, I show that Kerouac draws upon various personal and cultural influences to produce a novel that goes beyond self-inductive expression to that of historiographical and collective enactment. Kerouac's career, family, entertainment, and community discourses provide him a far-ranging articulation of the collective experience of his cultural moment. His commitment and growth as a practitioner of spontaneous prose allows him to tie them all together in novel length fashion for the first time. By utilizing both the archive and the repertoire of his subject materials, Kerouac enacts, as well as provides a model for, the doing of both.

Although this study has enabled an approach to Kerouac that addresses multiple fictions operating within a discussion of his spontaneous prose method, there have been constraints as well. One limitation to this study has been the methodological approach of genealogies as a governing epistemology of history making and meaning. Lambasting the traditionally held view of "objective" historical scholarship, Foucault writes that "If a genealogical analysis of a scholar were made—of one who collects facts and carefully accounts for them—his *Herkunft* [dissent] would quickly divulge the official papers of the scribe and pleadings of the lawyer...in their apparently disinterested attention, in the

‘pure’ devotion to objectivity” (82). As its antithesis would suggest, genealogists admit their own subjective imprints on the making of historical meaning and this study acknowledges this assertion. My more general research interests in the areas of performance art and historiography have informed my own choice of subjects operating within this study and their analyses. For another historical researcher, one whose interests were not my own, an analysis of Kerouac’s writing method could potentially reveal other “genes” relative to his writing method.

According to Heraclitus, one cannot step into the same river twice. The same is true of genealogies. Foucault asserts of the method that “What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.” Approaching historical subjects by means of their disparity reveals both strengths and weaknesses, yielding scholarship that produces what Foucault calls “a field of entangled and confused parchments” (79, 76). The benefit of a performance genealogy perspective is that it has allowed this study to engage the subject of Kerouac’s prose method on multiple levels. A number of different genes operating within its discourse have been identified as a result, but such disparity also suggests other areas of research that can and should be addressed. Primarily, this study would benefit by a closer and more sustained investigation of any of the diverse genes operating within the broader brushstrokes of the study.

One particular area in which this could be accomplished is by offering a wider sampling of Kerouac’s writing performances. This study has focused on the time period from 1950 to 1953 to show the trajectory of Kerouac’s writing method and to account for his determination to break literary boundaries. But this genealogy is certainly not

exhaustive, and it too calls for more disparity in approaching the larger corpus of Kerouac's writing. During this time period he also wrote the novella *The Subterraneans*, and later *Desolation Angels*, two of Kerouac's more accomplished books whose analysis would certainly contribute to this study. Furthermore, the more recent releases of Kerouac recordings also provide a rich resource for scholarship that is interested in the performative issues I raise here. To this end as well, his work in poetry, the film *Pull My Daisy*, his collaboration with musicians, and his recently published play *Beat Generation* offer exciting possibilities to an application of performative writing in other genres besides that of the novel.

Another suggestion for future research from a historiographical perspective that this study doesn't address as readily as it does with pre- and post-WWII culture is identifying the staying power of Jack Kerouac in contemporary culture. As Joseph Roach's *Cities of the Dead* shows, genealogical research provides a means by which historical subjects can be traced to contemporary practices. To have a greater appreciation of Kerouac the author, and not just his literary "rebel" label that is held by some of his readers, an attempt should be made to trace the genealogical influence of spontaneity in contemporary authorship and as a performance art practice. Such work needs to be done to address our own cultural condition, one that is marked in sometimes disturbing congruence with Kerouac's own conservative postwar age. By comparing how Kerouac's use of spontaneity influences contemporary practices, the genealogical role of performance activism can be further understood and appreciated.

Such research would also help in understanding Kerouac as a cultural actor, one whose identity helps in understanding many of the contemporary debates that inform

cultural research. The author's own expression of hybrid identities as a Franco-American needs to be explored more fully than it is here to help in articulating the postmodern turn that Kerouac's postwar moment helps in historically grounding. His performativity of race, class, and gender would also be benefited by a comparative approach to other authors. A potentially productive project would be to approach Kerouac's writing with other "Beat" writers as well as contemporary authors voicing the same concerns of cultural representation and enactment.

Another research area that this study has only begun to address is the role Kerouac's writing has in our understanding of autobiography, or autoperformance as it is known in some performance studies scholarship. Kerouac's work problematizes the dialectical categories offered by some autobiographical scholars in their discussion of historical constructions in this genre. In his essay "Relational Selves, Relational Lives: The Story of the Story," Paul John Eakin provides three binaries usually associated between male and female autobiographical constructions: "the individual as opposed to the collective, the autonomous as opposed to the relational, and in a different register, narrative as opposed to nonlinear, discontinuous, nonteleological forms" (66). As the historicity of its own scholarship shows, autobiography scholars have argued that males are usually said to provide the former model, while females provide the latter contributions. But as this study has shown, Kerouac's subject material and use of spontaneity would certainly suggest the latter's distinctions. Granted, Kerouac has never been confused with a feminist, and his shortcomings as an absentee father and his revealing of misogynistic attitudes often times cast him in an opposite light altogether.

But feminist theories concerning autobiography reveal a great resource for understanding Kerouac's approach to both gender and genre.

Eakin provides yet another myth that Kerouac's writing method would shed light on, asserting that "The myth of autonomy dies hard, and autobiography criticism has not yet fully addressed the extent to which the self is defined by—and lives in terms of—its relations with others" (63). Kerouac's novels reveal his own resistances towards the construction of patriarchal performativity, and he provides narratives that are highly collaborative processes rather than autonomous expressions of selfhood. As this study has shown, his relationship with Neal Cassady is the primary subject material for not one but two separate novels. Far from being excessively individualistic, then, Kerouac's writings provide a strong resource for scholars interested in the collaborative nature of male identity. In *Dr. Sax*, Kerouac's meditations on the construction of self-identity by means of separate discourses provide several forms of self-analysis, not just the self-expression usually associated with the genre. A potentially interesting study would be to compare Kerouac's approach to gender and collaborative autobiography to that of someone like Diane DiPrima, a contemporary female Beat writer.

Despite the limitations of this study, an approach to Kerouac's use of spontaneous prose by means of performance genealogy has revealed significant reclamation towards understanding Kerouac as an author and not just as a typist. This study follows in the footsteps of more contemporary critics who have begun the process of reclaiming the significance of Kerouac as an author and not just the popular image usually associated with the man or the Beat "movement." Although some of these critics have pointed out the importance of Kerouac's writing method in terms of its performance, this study

contributes to our understanding of spontaneous prose by means of a sustained discussion and application of performance studies theoretical resources. By addressing Kerouac's writing method by means of performative writing, both have made contributions to our understanding of the other.

According to Della Pollock:

writing as *doing* displaces writing as meaning; writing becomes meaningful in the material, dis/continuous act of writing.... performative writing is not a genre or fixed form ... but a way of describing what some good writing *does*.... Performativity describes a fundamentally material practice. Like performance, however, it is also an analytic, a way of framing and underscoring aspects of writing/life. (75)

This study has echoed this sentiment, showing that Kerouac's spontaneous prose is a much more complicated approach to the doing of writing than his earlier critics had granted or even his fans might appreciate. Kerouac was certainly not the only practitioner interested in incorporating spontaneous elements into the doing of writing. Before he himself started testing the limits of language by means of spontaneity, the Surrealists, Joyce, Faulkner, Stein, and others approached the subject in varying other experimental designs. Spontaneous prose then is not a fixed genre but a historiographical process, and this analysis has shown Kerouac himself was both successful and innovative, as well as unsuccessful and imitative, in its application. But an approach to Kerouac's writing method by means of performative writing has been fruitful in explicating other approaches to the practice. His approach to timing and sketching are especially profitable analytic contributions to the doing of the ephemeral. Perhaps the reason why we can further appreciate Kerouac's approach to writing is simply this: spontaneity is not just an approach to writing, but a means of approaching life itself.

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